*THE LITERARY LIFE*

*I.—AUTHORS AND AUTHORSHIP*

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*II.—PEN PICTURES OF MODERN AUTHORS*

(*In Press*)

THE LITERARY LIFE

*Edited by*
*WILLIAM SHEPARD*

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# AUTHORS AND AUTHORSHIP

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# PREFACE.

ALL lovers of books like to know something about the writers of books. We cannot help feeling an interest in those whose works have delighted and instructed us, and we value even the smallest details that throw a light upon their character and mode of living.

In the series of booklets of which this is the first it is the aim of the compiler to cater to this harmless appetite for personal information, in so far as it *is* harmless and does not degenerate into prurient curiosity; to present the reader to the man that underlies the author, as he appears in the social circle, in the privacy of his domestic hearth, or in public; to let him peep into his literary workshop in the moment of inspiration, or listen to his pleasant prattle about his books, his profession, or his fellow-authors; to make him play *valet-de-chambre*, as it were, with, I trust, no diminution of respect for the literary hero.

It is the general subject of authorship that is considered in this initial volume, and a number of opinions are here collected in regard to its trials, its temptations, its drawbacks, its advantages, which may not only be found of interest to the lay reader, but may prove suggestive and

useful, it is hoped, to the literary beginner. And as the value of these opinions depends largely upon the fact that they are the views of men who have in their different degrees achieved some measure of success in their profession, they have, as far as possible, been given in their integrity with very little editorial interference. The compiler has furnished not much more than the string which binds the various extracts together.

In conclusion it only remains to express the thanks that are due to authors and publishers (and among the latter to Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., in particular) for permission to make the selections from their copyrighted works, without which this book could not have had a being. Some acknowledgment also ought to be made of the fact that in the preparation of at least two of these chapters, the compiler has found the books of the Rev. Francis Jacox a mine of information to which the present condition of the copyright laws has given him free access.

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# CHAPTER I.

## THE LITERARY LIFE.

Carlyle and Thackeray quoted—Opposite views—The light and the dark si le of the author's life.

I DO not know that I can begin the series of pickings and stealings which is to make up the bulk of this volume better than by quoting from Thomas Carlyle, the foremost literary man of the nineteenth century, some opinions in regard to his own calling, which I find in his earliest published work, the "Life of Schiller":

### CARLYLE ON MEN OF LETTERS.

If to know wisdom were to practise it; if fame brought true dignity and peace of mind; or happiness consisted in nourishing the intellect with its appropriate food, and surrounding the imagination with ideal beauty, a literary life would be the most enviable which the lot of this world affords. But the truth is far otherwise. The Man of Letters has no immutable, all-conquering volition, more than other men; to understand and to perform are two very different things with him as with every one.

His fame rarely exerts a favorable influence on his dignity of character, and never on his peace of mind: its glitter is external, for the eyes of others; within, it is but the aliment of unrest, the oil cast upon the ever-gnawing fire of ambition, quickening into fresh vehemence the blaze which it stills for a moment. Moreover, this Man of Letters is not wholly made of spirit, but of clay and spirit mixed: his thinking faculties may be nobly trained and exercised, but he must have affections as well as thoughts to make him happy, and food and raiment must be given him or he dies. Far from being the most enviable, his way of life is perhaps, among the many modes by which an ardent mind endeavors to express its activity, the most thickly beset with suffering and degradation. Look at the biography of authors! Except the Newgate Calendar, it is the most sickening chapter in the history of man. The calamities of these people are a fertile topic; and too often their faults and vices have kept pace with their calamities. Nor is it difficult to see how this has happened. Talent of any sort is generally accompanied with a peculiar fineness of sensibility; of genius this is the most essential constituent; and life in any shape has sorrows enough for hearts so formed. The employments of literature sharpen this natural tendency; the vexations that accompany them frequently exasperate it into morbid soreness. The cares and toils of literature are the business of life; its delights are too ethereal and too transient to furnish that perennial flow of satisfaction, coarse but plenteous and substantial, of which happiness in this world of ours is made. The most finished efforts

of the mind give it little pleasure, frequently they give it pain; for men's aims are ever far beyond their strength. And the outward recompense of these undertakings, the distinction they confer, is of still smaller value: the desire for it is insatiable even when successful; and when baffled, it issues in jealousy and envy, and every pitiful and painful feeling. So keen a temperament with so little to restrain or satisfy, so much to distress or tempt it, produces contradictions which few are adequate to reconcile. Hence the unhappiness of literary men, hence their faults and follies.

Thus literature is apt to form a dangerous and discontenting occupation even for the amateur. But for him whose rank and worldly comforts depend on it, who does not live to write, but writes to live, its difficulties and perils are fearfully increased. Few spectacles are more afflicting than that of such a man, so gifted and so fated, so jostled and tossed to and fro in the rude bustle of life, the buffetings of which he is so little fitted to endure. Cherishing, it may be, the loftiest thoughts, and clogged with the meanest wants; of pure and holy purposes, yet ever driven from the straight path by the pressure of necessity, or the impulse of passion; thirsting for glory, and frequently in want of daily bread; hovering between the empyrean of his fancy and the squalid desert of reality; cramped and foiled in his most strenuous exertions; dissatisfied with his best performances, disgusted with his fortune, this Man of Letters too often spends his weary days in conflicts with obscure misery: harassed, chagrined, debased, or maddened; the victim at once of

tragedy and farce ; the last forlorn outpost in the war of Mind against Matter. Many are the noble souls that have perished bitterly, with their tasks unfinished, under these corroding woes ! Some in utter famine, like Otway ; some in dark insanity, like Cowper and Collins ; some, like Chatterton, have sought out a more stern quietus, and, turning their indignant steps away from a world which refused them welcome, have taken refuge in that strong Fortress, where poverty, and cold neglect, and the thousand natural shocks which flesh is heir to, could not reach them any more.

Yet among these men are to be found the brightest specimens and the chief benefactors of mankind ! It is they that keep awake the finer parts of our souls ; that give us better aims than power or pleasure, and withstand the total sovereignty of Mammon in this earth. They are the vanguard in the march of mind ; the intellectual Backwoodsmen, reclaiming from the idle wilderness new territories for the thought and the activity of their happier brethren. Pity that from all their conquests, so rich in benefit to others, themselves should reap so little ! But it is vain to murmur. They are volunteers in this cause ; they weighed the charms of it against the perils : and they must abide the results of their decision, as all must. The hardships of the course they follow are formidable, but not all inevitable ; and to such as pursue it rightly, it is not without its great rewards. If an author's life is more agitated and more painful than that of others, it may also be made more spirit-stirring and exalted ; fortune may render him unhappy ; it is only himself that

can make him despicable. The history of genius has, in fact, its bright side as well as its dark. And if it is distressing to survey the misery, and, what is worse, the debasement of so many gifted men, it is doubly cheering on the other hand to reflect on the few who, amid the temptations and sorrows to which life in all its provinces and most in theirs is liable, have travelled through it in calm and virtuous majesty, and are now hallowed in our memories, not less for their conduct than their waitings. Such men are the flower of this lower world; to such alone can the epithet of great be applied with its true emphasis. There is a congruity in their proceedings which one loves to contemplate: "He who would write heroic poems, should make his whole life a heroic poem."

So thought our Milton; and, what was more difficult, he acted so. To Milton, the moral king of authors, a heroic multitude, out of many ages and countries, might be joined; a "cloud of witnesses," that encompass the true literary man throughout his pilgrimage, inspiring him to lofty emulation, cheering his solitary thoughts with hope, teaching him to struggle, to endure, to conquer difficulties, or, in failure and heavy sufferings, to

> . . . . . "arm th' obdured breast
> With stubborn patience as with triple steel."

To say that this passage contains much that is noble and true, is merely to say that Carlyle wrote it. Perhaps it is a little too dismal in tone, and rather too suggestive, in consequence, of the maudlin

school of literature which, in the early part of this century, occupied itself with weeping over the woes of Genius with a big *G*,—the school, that is, of which Bulwer Lytton in his Byronic moods was about the most unhealthy exponent, and which Carlyle himself (and it is not his least title to honorable remembrance) was destined to sweep out of existence.

As a sort of offset, therefore, to this passage, I choose from another of the great writers of our century an article upon the same subject, which expressly repudiates the gloomy view of the literary life, and I find all the more satisfaction in giving this presentation of another side of the question in the fact that its author is Wm. M. Thackeray, a person who, however he may differ from Carlyle in other respects, has at least this much in common, that he was one of the most effective crusaders against the literary and social shams of the age. The article is from his earlier Fraserian sketches, and is in the form of a letter from Michael Angelo Titmarsh to the Reverend Francis Sylvester at Rome, the theme being suggested by the recent publication of Bulwer's "Life of Laman Blanchard":

LONDON, *Feb.* 20, 1846.

MY DEAR SIR:—Our good friend and patron, the publisher of this magazine, has brought me your message from Rome, and your demand to hear news from

the *other* great city of the world. As the forty columns of "The Times" cannot satisfy your reverence's craving, and the details of the great revolution of England which is actually going on do not sufficiently interest you, I send you a page or two of random speculations upon matters connected with the literary profession: they were suggested by reading the works and the biography of a literary friend of ours, lately deceased, and for whom every person who knew him had the warmest and sincerest regard. And no wonder. It was impossible to help trusting a man so thoroughly generous and honest, and loving one who was so perfectly gay, gentle, and amiable.

A man can't enjoy every thing in the world; but what delightful gifts and qualities are these to have! Not having known Blanchard as intimately as some others did, yet, I take it, he had in his life as much pleasure as falls to most men; the kindest friends, the most affectionate family, a heart to enjoy both; and a career not undistinguished, which I hold to be the smallest matter of all. But we have a cowardly dislike, or compassion, for the fact of a man dying poor. Such an one is rich, bilious, and a curmudgeon, without heart or stomach to enjoy his money, and we set him down as respectable; another is morose or passionate, his whole view of life seen blood-shot through passion, or jaundiced through moroseness; or he is a fool who can't see, or feel, or enjoy any thing at all, with no ear for music, no eye for beauty, no heart for love, with nothing except money: we meet such people every day, and respect them somehow.

That donkey browses over five thousand acres; that madman's bankers come bowing out to his carriage. You feel secretly pleased at shooting over the acres, or driving in the carriage. At any rate, nobody thinks of compassionating their owners. We are a race of flunkies, and keep our pity for the poor.

I don't mean to affix the plush personally upon the kind and distinguished gentleman and writer who has written Blanchard's Memoir; but it seems to me that it is couched in much too despondent a strain; that the lot of the hero of the little story was by no means deplorable; and there is not the least call, at present, to be holding up literary men as martyrs. Even that prevailing sentiment which regrets that means should not be provided for giving them leisure, for enabling them to perfect great works in retirement, that they should waste away their strength with fugitive literature, etc., I hold to be often uncalled for and dangerous. I believe, if most men of letters were to be pensioned, I am sorry to say I believe they wouldn't work at all; and of others, that the labor which is to answer the calls of the day is the one quite suited to their genius. Suppose Sir Robert Peel were to write to you, and, enclosing a check for £20,000, instruct you to pension any fifty deserving authors, so that they might have leisure to retire and write "great" works, on whom would you fix?

People in the big book interest, too, cry out against the fashion of fugitive literature, and no wonder. For instance:—

"The Times" gave an extract the other day from a

work by one Dr. Carus, physician to the King of Saxony, who attended his royal master on his recent visit to England, and has written a book concerning the journey. Among other London lions, the illustrious traveller condescended to visit one of the largest and most remarkable, certainly, of metropolitan roarers—"The Times" printing-office; of which the doctor, in his capacity as a man of science, gives an exceedingly bad, stupid, and blundering account.

Carus was struck with "disgust," he says, at the prodigious size of the paper, and at the thought which suggested itself to his mind from this enormity. There was as much printed every day as would fill a thick volume. It required ten years of life to a philosopher to write a volume. The issuing of these daily tomes was unfair upon philosophers, who were put out of the market; and unfair on the public, who were made to receive (and, worse still, to get a relish for) crude daily speculations, and frivolous ephemeral news, when they ought to be fed and educated upon stronger and simpler diet.

We have heard this outcry a hundred times from this big-wig body. The world gives up a lamentable portion of its time to fleeting literature; authors who might be occupied upon great works fritter away their lives in producing endless hasty sketches. Kind, wise, and good Dr. Arnold deplored the fatal sympathy which "The Pickwick Papers" had created among the boys of his school; and it is a fact that "Punch" is as regularly read among the boys at Eton as the Latin Grammar.

Arguing for liberty of conscience against any authority,

however great,—against Dr. Arnold himself, who seems to me the greatest, wisest, and best of men that has appeared for eighteen hundred years, let us take a stand at once, and ask, Why should not the day have its literature? Why should not authors make light sketches? Why should not the public be amused daily or frequently by kindly fictions? It is well and just for Arnold to object. Light stories of Jingle and Tupman, and Sam Weller quips and cranks, must have come with but a bad grace before that pure and lofty soul. The trivial and familiar are out of place there; the harmless joker must walk away abashed before such a presence, as he would be silent and hushed in a cathedral. But all the world is not made of that angelic stuff. From his very height and sublimity of virtue he could but look down and deplore the ways of small men beneath him. I mean, seriously, that I think the man was of so august and sublime a nature, that he was not a fair judge of us, or of the ways of the generality of mankind. One has seen a delicate person sicken and faint at the smell of a flower; it does not follow that the flower was not sweet and wholesome in consequence; and I hold that laughing and honest story books are good, against all the doctors.

Laughing is not the highest occupation of a man, very certainly; or the power of creating it the height of genius. I am not going to argue for that. No more is the blacking of boots the greatest occupation. But it is done, and well and honestly, by persons ordained to that calling in life, who arrogate to themselves (if they are straightforward and worthy shoeblacks) no especial rank or privi-

lege on account of their calling; and not considering boot-brushing the greatest effort of earthly genius, nevertheless select their Day and Martin, or Warren, to the best of their judgment, polish their upper leathers as well as they can, satisfy their patrons, and earn their fair wages.

I have chosen the unpolite shoe-black comparison, not out of disrespect to the trade of literature; but it is as good a craft as any other to select. In some way or other, for daily bread and hire, almost all men are laboring daily. Without necessity they would not work at all, or very little, probably. In some instances you reap Reputation along with Profit from your labor, but bread, in the main, is the incentive. Do not let us try to blink this fact, or imagine that the men of the press are working for their honor and glory, or go onward impelled by an irresistible afflatus of genius. If only men of genius were to write, Lord help us! how many books would there be? How many people are there even capable of appreciating genius? Is Mr. Wakely's or Mr. Hume's opinion about poetry worth much? As much as that of millions of people in this honest stupid empire; and they have a right to have books supplied for them as well as the most polished and accomplished critics have. The literary man gets his bread by providing goods suited to the consumption of these. This man of letters contributes a police report; that, an article containing downright information; this one, as an editor, abuses Sir Robert Peel, or lauds Lord John Russell, or *vice versâ*; writing to a certain class who coincide in his views, or are interested by the question which he moots. The

literary character, let us hope or admit, writes quite honestly; but no man supposes he would work perpetually but for money. And as for immortality, it is quite beside the bargain. Is it reasonable to look for it, or to pretend that you are actuated by a desire to attain to it? Of all the quill-drivers, how many have ever drawn that prodigious prize? Is it fair even to ask that many should? Out of a regard for poor dear posterity and men of letters to come, let us be glad that the great immortality number comes up so rarely. Mankind would have no time otherwise, and would be so gorged with old masterpieces, that they could not occupy themselves with new, and future literary men would have no chance of a livelihood.

To do your work honestly, to amuse and instruct your reader of to-day, to die when your time comes, and go hence with as clean a breast as may be; may these be all yours, and ours, by God's will. Let us be content with our *status* as literary craftsmen, telling the truth as far as may be, hitting no foul blow, condescending to no servile puffery, filling not a very lofty, but a manly and honorable part. Nobody says that Dr. Locock is wasting his time because he rolls about daily in his carriage, and passes hours with the nobility and gentry, his patients, instead of being in his study wrapt up in transcendental medical meditation. Nobody accuses Sir Fitzroy Kelley of neglecting his genius because he will take anybody's brief, and argue it in court for money, when he might sit in chambers with his oak sported, and give up his soul to investigations of the nature, history, and improvement of law. There is no question but that either

of the eminent persons, by profound study, might increase their knowledge in certain branches of their profession; but in the mean while the practical part must go on,—causes come on for hearing, and ladies lie in, and some one must be there. The commodities in which the lawyer and the doctor deal are absolutely required by the public, and liberally paid for; every day, too, the public requires more literary handicraft done; the practitioner in that trade gets a better trade and place. In another century, very likely, his work will be so necessary to his people, and his market so good, that his prices will double and treble; his social rank rise; he will be getting what they call "honors," and dying in the bosom of the genteel. Our calling is only sneered at because it is not well paid. The world has no other criterion for respectability. In heaven's name, what made people talk of setting up a statue to Sir William Follett? What had he done? He had made £300,000. What has George IV. done, that he, too, is to have a brazen image? He was an exemplar of no greatness, no good quality, no duty in life; but a type of magnificence, of beautiful coats, carpets, and gigs, turtle-soup, chandeliers, cream-colored horses, and delicious Maraschino,—all these good things he expressed and represented; and the world, respecting them beyond all others, raised statues to the first "gentleman in Europe." Directly the men of letters get rich, they will come in for their share of honor too; and a future writer in this miscellany may be getting ten guineas where we get one, and dancing at Buckingham Palace while you and your humble servant, dear Padre Fran-

cesco, are glad to smoke our pipes in quiet over the sanded floor of the little D——.

But the happy *homme de lettres*, whom I imagine in futurity kicking his heels *vis-à-vis* to a duchess in some fandango at the court of her majesty's grandchildren, will be in reality no better or honester, or more really near fame, than the quill-driver of the present day, with his doubtful position and small gains. Fame, that guerdon of high genius, comes quite independent of Berkeley Square, and is a republican institution. Look around to our own day among the holders of the pen: begin (without naming names, for that is odious) and count on your fingers those whom you will back in the race for immortality. How many fingers have you that are left untold? It is an invidious question. Alas! dear ——, and dear ——, you who think you are safe, there is futurity, and limbo, and blackness for you, beloved friends? *Cras ingens iterabimus æquor;* there's no use denying it, or shirking the fact; in we must go, and disappear for ever and ever.

And after all, what is this Reputation, the cant of our trade, the goal that every scribbling penny-a-liner demurely pretends that he is hunting after? Why should we get it? Why can't we do without it? We only fancy we want it. When people say of such and such a man who is dead, "He neglected his talents; he frittered away in fugitive publications time and genius, which might have led to the production of a great work"; this is the gist of Sir Bulwer Lytton's kind and affecting biographical notice of our dear friend and comrade Laman Blanchard, who passed away so melancholy last year.

I don't know any thing more dissatisfactory and absurd than that insane test of friendship which has been set up by some literary men, viz., admiration of their works. Say that this picture is bad, or that poem poor, or that article stupid, and there are certain authors and artists among us who set you down as an enemy forthwith, or look upon you as a *faux frère*. What is there in common with the friend and his work of art? The picture or article once done and handed over to the public, is the latter's property, not the author's, and to be estimated according to its honest value; and so, and without malice, I question Sir Bulwer Lytton's statement about Blanchard, viz., that he would have been likely to produce, with leisure, and under favorable circumstances, a work of the highest class. I think his education and habits, his quick, easy manner, his sparkling, hidden fun, constant tenderness, and brilliant good humor, were best employed as they were. At any rate he had a duty, much more imperative upon him than the preparation of great works—to get his family their dinner. A man must be a very Great man, indeed, before he can neglect this precaution.

I have said before, his calling was not thankless; his career, in the main, pleasant; his disappointment, if he had one, of the higher aims of ambition, one that might not uneasily be borne. If every man is disappointed because he cannot reach supreme excellence, what a mad, misanthropical world ours would be! Why should men of letters aim higher than they can hit, or be "disappointed" with the share of brains God has given them? Nor can you say a man's career is unpleasant, who was

so heartily liked and appreciated, as Blanchard was, by all persons of high intellect, or low, with whom he came in contact. He had to bear with some, but not unbearable poverty. At home he had every thing to satisfy his affection; abroad, every sympathy and consideration met this universally esteemed, good man. Such a calling as his is *not* thankless, surely. Away with this discontent and morbid craving for renown! A man who writes (Tennyson's) "Ulysses" or "Comus" *may* put in his claim for fame, if you will, and demand and deserve it; but it requires no vast power of intellect to write most sets of words, and have them printed in a book,—to write this article, for instance, or the last novel, pamphlet, book of travels. Most men with a decent education and practice of the pen could go and do the like, were they so professionally urged. Let such fall into the rank and file, and shoulder their weapons, and load and fire cheerfully. An every-day writer has no more right to repine because he loses the great prizes, and can't write like Shakspeare, than he has to be envious of Sir Robert Peel, or Wellington, or King Hudson, or Taglioni. Because the sun shines above, is a man to warm himself, and admire; or to despond because he can't in his person flare up like the sun? I don't believe that Blanchard was by any means an amateur-martyr, but was, generally speaking, very decently satisfied with his condition.

Out of Blanchard's life (except from the melancholy end, which is quite apart from it)[1] there is surely no

[1] Blanchard had cut his throat with a razor while in a delirious state of fever.

ground for drawing charges against the public of neglecting literature. His career, untimely concluded, is in the main a successful one. In truth, I don't see how the aid or interposition of government could in any way have greatly benefited him, or how it was even called upon to do so. It does not follow that a man would produce a great work even if he had leisure. Squire Shakspeare of Stratford, with his lands and rents, and his arms over his porch, was not the working Shakspeare; and indolence (or contemplation, if you like) is no unusual quality in the literary man. Of all the squires who have had acres and rents, all the holders of lucky, easy government places, how many have written books, and of what worth are they? There are some persons whom government, having a want of, employs and pays—barristers, diplomatists, soldiers, and the like; but it doesn't want poetry, and can do without tragedies. Let men of letters stand for themselves. Every day enlarges their market and multiplies their clients. The most skilful and successful among the cultivators of light literature have such a hold upon the public feelings, and awaken such a sympathy, as men of the class never enjoyed until now: men of science and learning, who aim at other distinction, get it; and, in spite of Dr. Carus' disgust, I believe there never was a time when so much of the practically useful was written and read, and every branch of book-making pursued, with an interest so eager.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE CHANCES OF LITERATURE.

Matthew Browne on success in literature—magazines and magazine writers—Chances offered by the periodical press—Oliver Wendell Holmes' advice to young authors—George William Curtis' letter to magazine contributors—Mark Twain's general reply to literary aspirants.

WHAT are the qualities necessary for success in literature, and in what way can the tyro best bring those qualities to the notice of the public? For answers to these questions I shall choose first an essay by Matthew Browne, who, being himself a successful littérateur,—the author of some books [1] which have enjoyed a fair sale, and a well-known contributor to many of the leading English monthlies,—is entitled to a voice upon the subject:

#### MATTHEW BROWNE ON SUCCESS IN LITERATURE.

Beginners in literature, or those who think of beginning, must be very much puzzled with the confusion of

[1] "Views and Opinions," a volume of literary essays, and "Liliput Levee," and other favorite books for children.

statement in what they read and what they hear about a literary life, taken in connection with their own observation and experience, if they have a little of either. Take the case of a young fellow who either is or thinks himself very clever ; who reads (as he may read in a dozen respectable places) that editors are only too glad to enlist fresh talent under their flags ; and who yet, while frequently sending papers to magazines whose editors he reasonably presumes to be discriminating, is always getting them returned. The conventional stroke of politeness (upon which a word of justification by and by), that the rejection of a proffered contribution does not necessarily imply that it wants merit, will hardly console him much, or clear up his bewilderment. And, in truth, I do not know that the case has ever been fairly and exhaustively stated.

Take, again, deliverances like that of Dickens, who over and over again declared, in print and out of it, that all the talk about literary cliques barring the way of the young adventurer, about lions in the path, and the rest of it, was nonsense ; he never found any lions in the way ; and success in literature turned exclusively upon the same points as success anywhere else, such as merit, perseverance, and so on. How would this have sounded to Jean Paul, starving for ten years because the public would not listen to him? His was a peculiar case ; but there are thousands of people to whom such words as those of Dickens must seem false and cruel.

Let us try and make a little *honest* way into the question. I promise not to shirk a single point that oc-

curs to me, out of my own experience or otherwise, or knowingly to overstate or understate a single fact.

In the first place, then, success, great or small, in literature, depends upon the same conditions as good fortune of all other kinds in this mixed and trying world. Much depends upon what we call chance. The good tradesman may be sent to the wall by the bad; the brave soldier does *not* always, or usually, carry a marshal's baton in his knapsack, or even, as a rule, get the recognition he deserves, as desert goes under the sun. There is a chance of success for every man who tries after it. The normal order of things is for merit to win the prize. And this normal order is actually verified in a number of cases sufficient to encourage any one who cares to try and make his own case illustrate it once again. This is merely general; but it must be borne in mind. I do not know that to men who fail there is any particular consolation in it. And, on the other hand, to speak out boldly the truth, that merit does not always succeed, too often acts like an infuriating red rag to the very people who have no merit at all. It encourages them to consider themselves victims when they are only nuisances, and they go on butting all the more at the barriers that will never fall before *their* style of attack.

Here, however, we must define. What is "success"? What is your precise object in literature? If it is money, immediate fame, or indeed fame at all, then you may be enabled, after a certain number of attempts, to say if you have succeeded, or, in any case, if success is probable. The same applies if your object is any thing

else that is immediately tangible, like a party movement or a social change, for example. But the case becomes more difficult when we pass upward from the ranks of the "Bread-Artist," as the Germans call him. Suppose a man has set his heart upon the production of poetry that will live, or the communication of a certain impulse to the thoughts or feelings of men. Here, we may affirm, to begin with, that, if he has once found an audience of much variety, genuine qualification is certain of *some* recognition. The *variety* in the audience is, however, essential if this is to hold true. Reason good: what is one man's meat is another man's poison; and numbers of persons, though sensitive to merit of one kind, are insensitive to merit of another. But the effect a man produces as poet, thinker, or what not, during his lifetime, is no gauge whatever of the value of his communications to the world; that he is at once recognized by competent people proves that there is something in him; but what may happen in the way of subsequent recognition is all dark. Spinoza, while living, was known for an able man, but his public and his influence have been immensely greater since his death, and the amount of his influence upon modern thought is utterly inscrutable. John Sterling has been much more influential since his death than he ever was during his life, so far as we can tell. But these are matters in which we never *can* "tell" much. So that no man who has found his capacity recognized need despair at what appears to him the limited character of the impression he has made. A clergyman named Gay lives in philosophy on the strength

of a mere pamphlet, in which (what is called) the law of association is (said to be) first assigned its proper place. Waller, Richard Lovelace, Gray, Andrew Marvell, and others, are remembered chiefly by a few happy lines apiece.

> "Give me but what this ribbon bound,
> Take all the rest the sun goes round."

It is this exquisite couplet which may be said to have kept Waller alive. It is an awkward thing to refer to living poets; but I believe that very small sweet fragments will keep Mr. William Allingham and some others in memory quite as long as Mr. Tennyson or Mr. Browning will be known.

The statement, so often repeated, and by people who ought to know better than to say such a misleading thing as that naked statement—I mean the *dictum* that capacity need never fear of failing to find prompt acceptance, inasmuch as editors are always on the look-out for fresh talent—is one that must be received with much qualification and reserve. It may be taken as a general rule that very special talent, amounting to genius, stands at first a bad chance, especially with periodicals. What chance would any thing as new as Richter's "Hesperus" or Mr. Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus" have with our ordinary magazine? The chances are a million to one that the editor, though able and good-natured, would reject it at once, as not being "suited" to his "pages." A reason which would perhaps be a sound one; yet nobody can tell till the trial is made what kind of public an eccentric intellectual product may

find. We know what a hard fight a man like Mr. Browning has to wage before he wins his way to such a position that he is sure of being read; and it is precisely the same with eccentric capacity of a lower order. That also is under difficulties. Two or three kinds of capacity stand a good chance at once. First, brilliancy of a slightly *bourgeois* or "philistine" order. Ingoldsby is a case in point, and, irreverent though it seems, so is Dickens.[1] Secondly, talent of the usual journalistic or magazine kind, combined with adequate culture and knowledge of the world. Third, effective power, not easily fatigued and quick to produce, of an order which happens to suit the market at the time. At this moment, for example, the talent of the journalist and the talent of the novelist are in great request. It cannot be said that the supply of either exceeds the demand. But here is perhaps the place to say that no capacity of any kind can hope to succeed without preparatory study and self-culture directed to the precise end in view.

One of the reasons which tell against the mere outside adventurers is this—that every editor is surrounded by known and tried contributors, who now and then wish to recommend or bring forward others. Friendly feeling weighs with editors, like other people; and so it ought. You, the outsider and stranger, may send a fairly good paper to a given periodical; but unless it is very decidedly better than any by the literary adherents of

[1] This truth being spoken—for the truth it is—only dull people will disbelieve me when I add that it is impossible that any one should have a more intense feeling for the genius of Dickens than I have.

the periodical, among whom are sure to be personal friends of its managers, why should the editor give you the preference? He may be ever so ready to give you a chance; but, alas, it is morally certain that he has arrears, perhaps six months long or more, of good articles from valued contributors, some of whom are pressing him, more or less gently, to give *them* a preference.

Besides this, there is the policy of the periodical to carry out, or its character to maintain. This is a matter upon which the managers must be the judges, without appeal; and they will mentally have their own notions of the way in which the subject-matter should be, so to speak, mixed or beaten-up. The nicest shade of difference or resemblance, of relevancy or irrelevancy (with reference to other articles or to current topics), may determine the acceptance, the rejection, the insertion, or the delay of an article. Then, again, reasons of personal feeling often induce a kind and conscientious editor to "pack" his periodical in a manner which he would, for its immediate prosperity's sake, prefer to avoid. That is, he may feel it his duty—nay, even in rare cases, his interest—to insert articles which the general principles of his procedure would certainly exclude. He might know that the public had had too much, for instance, of the Irish church question, and yet be in such a position with regard to the author of an article too much on that subject as to feel that it would be unkind or even unfair to refuse that article. In fact, the considerations which determine the packing of a magazine are incalculably intricate.

The question of the value of personal influence in advancing the beginner who is attempting to find his way into literature has always, so far as my reading goes, been untruthfully described. We have been constantly told that in literature introductions are of no use ; merit every thing. But why should literature be unlike any other thing under heaven in this respect? Put the case of obtaining an audience wholly irrespective of profit. Here, the speaking-trumpet that falls to a man's lot is of the very utmost moment. If he happens to have something strikingly appropriate to say of an immediately exciting topic, he has a chance of being able to get a good speaking-trumpet. I am thinking now of the "Letters of an Englishman," which, as far as I know, were at once admitted to the *Times* solely on the strength of their merit and their applicability. But it is very rarely that so many favorable conditions concur as happened to unite in that particular case. In ninety-nine instances out of a hundred the value of an introduction in getting a writer a good speaking-trumpet is immense. A celebrated name is a kind of introduction which will illustrate the subject very well. Mr. Matthew Arnold, for example, inherits a name which is historical, and which has all the effect of most powerful introductions. Apart from his genuine capacities and high culture, he has been immensely indebted, as a political and social critic, to the speaking-trumpet—the *Pall Mall Gazette*—which personal accidents placed in his power. There was not another organ in the world in which his peculiar communications would have been welcomed and would

have found, at once, so favorable and so large an audience. The *Pall Mall Gazette* was itself an accident, and the circumstances that gave him his speaking-trumpet were a sort of accident, and nothing else. For myself, while the most felicitous literary incident of my life was what people would call fortuitous as well—that is, I was indebted to no introduction for it—I assert that it is mere rant and fustian to deny the value of introductions in literary business matters. They will not procure success for bad work, but they give a particular piece of ordinary good work the exceptional chance which is necessary for the acquisition of a footing. And for business purposes that is every thing. It is true, all this applies more to journalism than to other kinds of literary work. But this just covers the largest field of all, and the field in which the competitors are, upon a superficial view, the most nearly equal. Now, the hasty view which, alone, an overworked editor is able to take of the pretensions of a new-comer, is necessarily superficial.

So very few persons have the requisite faculties for judging of poetry, that that is in a very peculiar position. Here, and in the better sorts of fiction, introduction can do—we may say—nothing. Perhaps a real gift for poetry, or a real gift for story-telling, is, of all literary gifts, the one that is most sure to find its own way. The number of persons who can tell a good story from a bad one is very considerable; so that, though a new-comer with startling peculiarities may be snubbed here and there, the beginner in fiction, if really capable, stands a good chance. On the other hand, though the number of

people who can tell poetry from mere good verse is few, it is easy, a certain degree of merit once reached, to get poetry printed. And then, the few who *do* know good poetry have a quick scent for it. So those who have cast bread upon the waters in that kind may rest tranquil—they have been, or will be, found out. Besides, though it costs something, it is not so *very* difficult to get a volume of poetry into print nowadays. And poetry is, I repeat, almost certain to be found out by somebody. This remains true, in spite of the fact that there is sometimes a conflict of verdicts. The least competent and most adverse critic of Keats and Wordsworth would not have denied, upon being pressed, that the *differentia* of their minds was poetic; the rest, it will be observed, was mere matter of (what is called) taste. The radical question put by the man who thinks he sings is, "Do you acknowledge this for singing?" All the praise in the critic's ink-pot that does not go to this point should be held worthless; all the blame that admits this point may be borne with, however unjust or foolish.

The following passage is quoted from an American periodical of high standing:

"Perhaps no taste differs more than literary taste. Men of trained judgment and rare culture differ from each other almost as much as the boor and the philosopher. This is shown in the popular magazines, not only occasionally, but constantly. What the *Galaxy* rejects *Putnam's* prints with entire readiness; the essay *Harper's* repudiates meets with favor in the *Atlantic;* and the

poem the *Atlantic* 'declines with thanks' is published in the *Broadway*. Every month the editor of some one of the monthlies discovers in his rivals the manuscript he has returned to the owner, while he himself prints and praises what his contemporaries have pronounced unworthy. We know a very clever authoress—one of the most famous in the country—who sends her composition at one time, first to the *Atlantic*, then to *Harper's*, then to the *Galaxy;* next time, first to the *Galaxy*, etc., just reversing the order. Some one of the serials usually rejects it, but another always accepts; and she says candidly she would not give a fig for the judgment of any of them. Concerning the taste of critics, who shall decide?"

This crude bit of comment may well be taken as an illustration of some of the foregoing hints. No doubt one magazine may reject what another will insert. Of course a religious review might decline what a secular review might welcome. But that is not all, or half: for the question goes far beyond "literary taste." The condition of the editor's pigeon-holes is a ruling element in the case. The *Galaxy* may reject a piece of "subjective" verse because it is already overdone with such matter, while *Putnam's* may run short of it just then. Or, again, an article may be declined because if published in a particular magazine it might "take the edge off" an article or series of articles projected at the time. If an editor had engaged a well-known contributor to write for him a set of papers on a given topic, he would almost certainly decline to insert a casual paper on the same or

a similar topic which happened to reach him at about the same date. In fact, there are a hundred, or a hundred thousand, ways in which a really good article may be "not suited to our pages."

I confess that I cannot entirely agree with Mr. Browne when he asserts that "very special talent, amounting to genius," stands at first a bad chance, *especially* with periodicals. Talent of this kind stands a much better chance with an editor than with the general public, and I hold that in the present state of periodical literature a man of genius cannot fail to fight his way into the front rank of Maga contributors. Certainly the examples cited by Mr. Browne do not help his theory. Richter belongs to a past order of things, and he can hardly enter into the discussion at all. But Carlyle, who, in his literary eccentricities, is a sort of nineteenth-century Richter, is a most unfortunate selection. Mr. Browne does not seem to be aware of the fact that "Sartor Resartus" did first appear in "Fraser's Magazine." And for many years before the publication of the Sartor, when Carlyle's name was unknown to the world at large, he was a constant and valued contributor to the leading magazines of his day. Then, as to Browning, while the public refuses to buy his books—he publishes at his own expense and loses money on every venture—the magazines are always eager to receive what he

may send them. And what is true of England is true also of this country. Nathaniel Hawthorne, who describes himself as having been for many years the obscurest man of letters in America, in the darkest days of his obscurity does not appear to have had any difficulty in getting his sketches accepted and published. The general public may have ignored him, but almost from the time when he first took up a pen he had a small band of enthusiastic admirers among professional men of letters. And look at the number of our best writers who have won their way to public appreciation through the pages of the monthlies. Among the younger generation, at least, every one of the famous names has commenced as a magazinist. To find a new genius, or, failing that, a new talent of a high order, is the proudest success that an editor can achieve. During the ten years that *Scribner's Monthly* has existed, it has accomplished no greater feats than the discovery of Mrs. Hodgson Burnett, Saxe Holm, and George W. Cable, Jr. And what a goodly array of names the *Atlantic Monthly* has either introduced or helped to introduce to public notice! Henry James, Jr., W. D. Howells, Col. T. W. Higginson, J. W. De Forest, E. E. Hale, Louisa M. Alcott, Mrs. Piatt, John Hay, H. H.—the list might be almost indefinitely extended. Other writers owe their success to other magazines.

In fact, it is getting to be more and more apparent that the periodicals are to be the future medium through which young people ambitious of literary honors must seek their public. The author of a promising novel or romance may still, it is true, be able to find among the numerous book-publishers throughout the country one who will be willing to invest his capital in bringing it out, but the poet, the essayist, the writer of short stories must appeal to Maga if he wishes to secure a hearing. No publisher would be bold enough to take any risk in the works of these writers, unless they had already won a very considerable reputation as magazinists. Nevertheless it is not to be understood from what is said above that admission to a first-class periodical is by any means an easy matter. I have only been asserting that a commanding talent is sure of *eventual* recognition. But even commanding talent must submit to a preparatory training. And for the large number of aspirants who have within them the possibility of rising not much higher than the average standard, that preparatory training is apt to be such a long and disheartening one as to drive them off the track long before they have reached the goal.

A very simple test will suffice to show how crowded is the way leading to success. Take bound volumes of the four leading magazines and run your

eye down the table of contents. You will find that in the course of a half-year some three hundred articles, exclusive of serials and editorial essays, have been contributed to these four publications. At least one-third of these are by writers of the first grade,—men or women whose mere names are sufficient to gain access into a magazine for any thing they may choose to write. Another third, say, have been contributed by writers who, without any extensive reputation, are well known to editors as capable of turning out acceptable articles—whose offerings have to be read, to be sure, before they can be decided upon, but who, in the long run, are sure to have the majority of what they send in accepted. A total, consequently, of only about one hundred articles is left for authors of little or no present note. Now bear in mind that, according to competent authority, the number of articles published stands in relation to the number of MSS. received in about the proportion of one to fifty, and you will have some idea as to the thousands of people all over the Union who are trying to contribute to those four magazines just those one hundred articles a year. Not a very brilliant outlook, apparently! And yet the old adage, There is always room at the top, will apply here as well as elsewhere. In magazine literature, as in other things, the fittest is bound to survive.

In the ever delightful "Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table" I find some words upon this very subject which come in so appropriately that I shall quote them here:

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES' ADVICE TO YOUNG AUTHORS.

Sometimes very young persons send communications, which they want forwarded to editors; and these young persons do not always seem to have right conceptions of these same editors, and of the public, and of themselves. Here is a letter I wrote to one of these young folks, but, on the whole, thought it best not to send. It is not fair to single out one for such sharp advice, where there are hundreds that are in need of it.

DEAR SIR:—You seem to be somewhat, but not a great deal, wiser than I was at your age. I don't wish to be understood as saying too much, for I think, without committing myself to any opinion on my present state, that I was not a Solomon at that stage of development.

You long to "leap at a single bound into celebrity." Nothing is so commonplace as to wish to be remarkable. Fame usually comes to those who are thinking about something else,—very rarely to those who say to themselves: "Go to, now, let us be a celebrated individual!" The struggle for fame, as such, commonly ends in notoriety;—that ladder is easy to climb, but it leads to the pillory which is crowded with fools

who could not hold their tongues and rogues who could not hide their tricks.

If you have the consciousness of genius, do something to show it. The world is pretty quick, nowadays, to catch the flavor of true originality; if you write any thing remarkable, the magazines and newspapers will find you out, as the school-boys find out where the ripe apples and pears are. Produce any thing really good, and an intelligent editor will jump at it. Don't flatter yourself that any article of yours is rejected because you are unknown to fame. Nothing pleases an editor more than to get any thing worth having from a new hand. There is always a dearth of really fine articles for a first-rate journal; for, of a hundred pieces received, ninety are at or below the sea-level; some have water enough, but no head; some head enough, but no water; only two or three are from full reservoirs, high up that hill which is so hard to climb.

You may have genius. The contrary is of course probable, but it is not demonstrated. If you have, the world wants you more than you want it. It has not only a desire, but a passion, for every spark of genius that shows itself among us; there is not a bull-calf in our national pasture that can bleat a rhyme but it is ten to one among his friends, and no takers, that he is the real, genuine, no-mistake Osiris.

*Qu' est-ce qu' il a fait?* What has he done? That was Napoleon's test. What have you done? Turn up the faces of your picture cards, my boy! You need not make mouths at the public because it has not accepted

you at your own fancy valuation. Do the prettiest thing you can, and wait your time.

For the verses you send me I will not say they are hopeless, and I dare not affirm that they show promise. I am not an editor, but I know the standard ot some editors. You must not expect to "leap with a single bound" into the society of those whom it is not flattery to call your betters. When "The Pactolian" has paid you for a copy of verses (I can furnish you a list of alliterative signatures, beginning with Annie Aureole and ending with Zoë Zenith),—when "The Ragbag" has stolen your piece, after carefully scratching your name out,—when "The Nut-Cracker" has thought you worth shelling, and strung the kernel of your cleverest poem,—then, and not till then, you may consider the presumption against you, from the fact of your rhyming tendency, as called in question, and let our friends hear from you, if you think it worth while. You may possibly think me too candid, and even accuse me of incivility; but let me assure you that I am not half so plain-spoken as Nature, nor half so rude as Time. If you prefer the long jolting of public opinion to the gentle touch of friendship, try it like a man. Only remember this, that, if a bushel of potatoes is shaken in a market-cart without springs to it, the small potatoes always get to the bottom.

Believe me, etc., etc.

I always think of verse-writers, when I am in this vein; for these are by far the most exacting, eager, self-weighing, restless, querulous, unreasonable literary persons one

is like to meet with. Is a young man in the habit of writing verses? Then the presumption is that he is an inferior person. For, look you, there are at least nine chances in ten that he writes *poor* verses. Now, the habit of chewing on rhymes without sense and soul to match them is, like that of using any other narcotic, at once a proof of feebleness and a debilitating agent. A young man can get rid of the presumption against him afforded by his writing verses only by convincing us that they are verses worth writing.

All this sounds hard and rough, but observe, it is not addressed to any individual, and of course does not refer to any reader of these pages. I would always treat any given young person passing through the meteoric showers which rain down on the brief period of adolescence with great tenderness. God forgive us if we ever speak harshly to young creatures on the strength of these ugly truths, and so, sooner or later, smite some tender-souled poet or poetess on the lips, who might have sung the world into sweet trances had we not silenced the matin-song in its first low breathings! Just as my heart yearns over the unloved, just so it sorrows for the ungifted who are doomed to the pangs of an undeceived self-estimate. I have always tried to be gentle with the most hopeless cases. My experience, however, has not been encouraging.

——X. Y., æt. 18, a cheaply-got-up youth, with narrow jaws, and broad, bony, cold, red hands, having been laughed at by the girls in his village, and "got the mitten" (pronounced mitt'n) two or three times, falls to

souling and controlling, and youthing and truthing, in the newspapers. Sends me some strings of verses, candidates for the Orthopedic Infirmary, all of them, in which I learn for the millionth time one of the following facts: either that something about a chime is sublime, or that something about time is sublime, or that something about a chime is concerned with time, or that something about a rhyme is sublime or concerned with time or with a chime. Wishes my opinion of the same, with advice as to his future course.

What shall I do about it? Tell him the whole truth, and send him a ticket of admission to the Institution for Idiots and Feeble-minded Youth? One doesn't like to be cruel,—and yet one hates to lie. Therefore one softens down the ugly central fact of donkeyism,—recommends study of good models,—that writing verse should be an incidental occupation only, not interfering with the hoe, the needle, the lapstone, or the ledger,—and, above all, that there should be no hurry in printing what is written. Not the least use in all this. The poetaster who has tasted type is done for. He is like the man who has once been a candidate for the Presidency. He feeds on the madder of his delusion all his days, and his very bones grow red with the glow of his foolish fancy. One of these young brains is like a bunch of India crackers; once touch fire to it and it is best to keep hands off until it has done popping—if it ever stops. I have two letters on file; one is a pattern of adulation, the other of impertinence. My reply to the first, containing the best advice I could give, conveyed in courteous language, had brought out

the second. There was some sport in this; but Dulness is not commonly a game fish, and only sulks after he is struck. You may set it down as a truth which admits of few exceptions, that those who ask your *opinion* really want your *praise*, and will be contented with nothing less.

There is another kind of application to which editors, or those supposed to have access to them, are liable, and which often proves trying and painful. One is appealed to in behalf of some person in needy circumstances who wishes to make a living by the pen. A manuscript accompanying the letter is offered for publication. It is not commonly brilliant, too often lamentably deficient. If Rachel's saying is true, that "fortune is the measure of intelligence," then poverty is evidence of limited capacity, which it too frequently proves to be, notwithstanding a noble exception here and there. Now, an editor is a person under a contract with the public to furnish them with the best things he can afford for his money. Charity shown by the publication of an inferior article would be like the generosity of Claude Duval and the other gentlemen highwaymen, who pitied the poor so much they robbed the rich to have the means of relieving them.

Though I am not and never was an editor, I know something of the trials to which they are submitted. They have nothing to do but to develop enormous calluses at every point of contact with authorship. Their business is not a matter of sympathy, but of intellect. They must reject the unfit productions of

those whom they long to befriend, because it would be a profligate charity to accept them. One cannot burn his house down to warm the hands even of the fatherless and the widow.

In regard to the grievance mentioned in the last paragraph of Dr. Holmes' article, Mr. George William Curtis has a pleasant Easy-Chair paper which I take the liberty of copying.

### CURTIS' ENCYCLICAL LETTER TO MAGAZINE CONTRIBUTORS.

It is not only unnecessary [says Mr. Curtis] to state to the editor the personal circumstances of the author, but it is prejudicial to the chance of acceptance of his manuscript. A profile cut by scissors held in the toes, as the armless Mr. Elderkin cut them, or a picture painted with a brush held in the teeth, as poor paralyzed Carter held it, may be marvels of dexterity, and the "Rat-catcher" of the last was really remarkable as a picture; but they are chiefly interesting as *tours de force*, as prodigies. A picture would not command the best place in the exhibition for the reason that it was painted with the foot; and a poem or an essay is not recommended to an editor by the fact that the author has a chronic rheumatism, or is obliged to work for a living. The manuscripts sent by faithful daughters who have aged and infirm mothers to support, and who beg the editor to remember that afflicting fact before he rejects the offering, are merely petitions

for alms, for charity, and are worthy of the most careful attention as such. But fancy Sam Johnson forwarding to a publisher the manuscript of *Rasselas* and begging attention to it as the work of a gentleman with an unfortunate tendency to scrofula! It is not the health or the pecuniary or family circumstances of the writer with which the editor is concerned, but the character of his manuscript. If, indeed, it be a record of travel or adventure, he naturally wishes evidence of authenticity; but again we say information in regard to headaches and gout is wholly superfluous and impertinent.

There is another tendency of him or her who offers communications to a periodical that are not accepted which is equally to be avoided. It is the expression of wonder why his or her ode to a mole does not find favor, when that elegy on a late lamented dormouse was published last month. "Far be it from me to insinuate," writes Asterisk, or Lco, or Sappho, or X, or the Bard of Dollyvalley, "that I can justly aspire to the laurel wreath of a poet, or touch the lyre to numbers that will arrest the heedless throng; but surely the poor lines that I ventured to inclose to you are not more devoid of the true poetic afflatus than those which I find upon the twenty-seventh page of your last number, or than others which I constantly find upon your pages." Let us invite Asterisk, or X, or Sappho to reflect for a moment. The same day that brought his poor lines brought fifty more copies of equally poor lines from others; and the next day and all days repeat the wondrous tale. If all should be accepted, only the thousandth part could ever

be published. Why, then, accept? Should Asterisk nimbly retort, "But, why, then, accept any? or why not mine as well as those of Timotheus?" he must understand that it is he, and not the editor, who says that his lines are as good as those which were published last month; and that if a selection is to be made among the equally poor, his has no superior claims to any of the others, and must take the chance. Somebody must decide—and that somebody is the editor. He must seem, indeed, totally devoid of taste and insight to those whose offerings are—not "rejected," for no such harsh word is known in the editorial vocabulary, but—not found available for our purpose. What collocation of words could more delicately sigh, in a whisper as of the dying west wind, "thank you, no!" But this is a severity of judgment which the editor must endure as he can. Yet with as much experience of the heartless and ignorant and prejudiced and cruel class known as editors as most of those whose poems and sketches are—not found available for our purpose, and whose eyes are therefore opened to the real character of editors, the Easy Chair has always found that there are still lingering traces of our common humanity to be observed in them, and that they betray no fiendish joy even in discovering that McFlecnoe's lay is—not available for our purpose. It may be hard for McFlecnoe to understand, but the editor prefers to accept an article rather than to decline it. He fondly hopes that each new manuscript will be that clear and wise and interesting, that bright and pleasant paper, for which he is constantly looking. And with Charles Lamb

upon another occasion he relucts at the inevitable course of destiny that baffles his expectation.

One word more the Easy Chair would add to this encyclical letter. It is the suggestion that the disappointed author should bear as patiently as possible the form in which he is apprised of the editor's regret that his paper, upon the merits of which no opinion is expressed, is not found available, etc., etc. It was only the other day that Virgilius attacked the Easy Chair with great determination, and wished to know if authors were to be insulted because their offerings were declined. The Easy Chair certainly hoped not, and declared that, being in its small way a member of the noble guild of letters, it would show its share of proper resentment upon any such provocation. Upon inquiry it appeared that Virgilius had sent an essay to a certain magazine, accompanied by a note from one of the literary fathers, asking attention to it, and that the essay had been returned with a courteous printed form delicately conveying an unpleasant truth—to wit, that it was not available, etc., etc.

"I have no doubt that it was poor stuff!" exclaimed Virgilius—how *could* he say so? for in his secret heart he thinks it one of the very finest performances in unpublished English literature!—"but I do think that Mr. ——'s letter deserved the respect of an especial written reply."

The Easy Chair begged Virgilius to consider the impossibility of writing a careful answer with every contribution that is declined by a great office, even if it be recommended as his own was. Where manuscripts are incessantly arriving by the score there must be the most

rigorous system. They must be carefully registered, examined, accepted, or returned by a regular method ; and, when returned, the exact degree of favor with which an article was regarded cannot be expressed, and the writer must have the courtesy to believe that no discourtesy is intended by the strict observation of the method. Reasons can not be given, and there is no time for compliments and prolonged regrets. There is many a reader of these lines who will sooner or later offer an admirable paper to some magazine. The Easy Chair does not afflict him with Mr. Punch's advice to those about to marry, but it does ask him not to begin by writing or calling to inquire whether his article would be acceptable, but to send the paper without any accompanying remarks upon the state of his health, or the condition of his purse, or any personal or family history whatever. He may be sure that every editor will warmly welcome every thing he really wants, and will regret the pain that must necessarily follow the formal announcement that the article is not found exactly available, etc., etc.

Like Dr. Holmes, Mark Twain, in an early stage of his literary career, found it necessary to print a general reply to the numerous correspondents who flocked to him for advice and assistance, and the good, strong common-sense which marks his letter of advice makes it well worth resuscitating from the columns of the magazine in which it originally appeared.

MARK TWAIN'S GENERAL REPLY.

Every man who becomes editor of a newspaper or

magazine straightway begins to receive MSS. from literary aspirants, together with a request that he will deliver judgment upon the same. And after complying in eight or ten instances, he finally takes refuge in a general sermon upon the subject, which he inserts in his publication, and always afterward refers such correspondents to that sermon for answer. I have at last reached this station in my literary career. I now cease to reply privately to my applicants for advice, and proceed to construct my public sermon.

As all letters of the sort I am speaking of contain the very same matter, differently worded, I offer as a fair average specimen the last one I have received :

Dear Sir : I am a youth, just out of school and ready to start in life. I have looked around, but don't see any thing that suits exactly. Is a literary life easy and profitable, or is it the hard lines it is generally put up for ? It *must* be easier than a good many if not most of the occupations, and I feel drawn to launch out on it, make or break, sink or swim, survive or perish. Now, what are the conditions of success in literature ? You need not be afraid to paint the thing just as it is. I can't do any worse than fail. Every thing else offers the same. When I thought of the law—yes, and five or six other professions—I found the same thing was the case every time, viz. : *all full—overrun—every profession so crammed that success is rendered impossible—too many hands and not enough work.* But I must try *something*, and so I turn at last to literature. Something tells me that is the true bent of my genius, if I have any. I enclose some of my pieces. Will you read them over and give me your candid, unbiassed opinion of them ? And now I hate to trouble you, but you have been a young man yourself,

and what I want is for you to get me a newspaper job of writing to do. You know many newspaper people, and I am entirely unknown. And will you make the best terms you can for me? though I do not expect what might be called high wages at first, of course. Will you candidly say what such articles as these I enclose are worth? I have plenty of them. If you should sell these and let me know, I can send you more, as good and may be better than these. An early reply, etc.

I will answer you in good faith. Whether my remarks shall have great value or not, or my suggestions be worth following, are problems which I take great pleasure in leaving entirely to you for solution. To begin: There are several questions in your letter which only a man's life experience can eventually answer for him—not another man's words. I will simply skip those.

1. Literature, like the ministry, medicine, the law, and *all other* occupations, is cramped and hindered for want of men to do the work, not want of work to do. When people tell you the reverse, they speak that which is not true. If you desire to test this, you need only hunt up a first-class editor, reporter, business manager, foreman of a shop, mechanic, or artist in any branch of industry, and *try to hire him.* You will find that he is already hired. He is sober, industrious, capable, and reliable, and is always in demand. He cannot get a day's holiday except by courtesy of his employer, or his city, or the great general public. But if you need idlers, shirkers, half-instructed, unambitious, and comfort-seeking editors, reporters, lawyers, doctors, and mechanics, apply anywhere. There

are millions of them to be had at the dropping of a handkerchief.

2. No; I must not and will not venture any opinion whatever as to the literary merit of your productions. The public is the only critic whose judgment is worth any thing at all. Do not take my poor word for this, but reflect a moment and take your own. For instance, if Sylvanus Cobb or T. S. Arthur had submitted their maiden MSS. to you, you would have said, with tears in your eyes, "Now please don't write any more!" But you see yourself how popular they are. And if it had been left to you, you would have said the "Marble Faun" was tiresome, and that even "Paradise Lost" lacked cheerfulness; but you know they sell. Many wiser and better men than you pooh-poohed Shakespeare, even as late as two centuries ago; but still that old party has outlived those people. No, I will not sit in judgment upon your literature. If I honestly and conscientiously praised it, I might thus help to inflict a lingering and pitiless bore upon the public; if I honestly and conscientiously condemned it, I might thus rob the world of an undeveloped and unsuspected Dickens or Shakespeare.

3. I shrink from hunting up literary labor for you to do and receive pay for. Whenever your literary productions have proved for themselves that they have a real value, you will never have to go around hunting for remunerative literary work to do. You will require more hands than you have now, and more brains than you probably ever will have, to do even half the work that will be offered you. Now, in order to arrive at the proof of

value hereinbefore spoken of, one needs only to adopt a very simple and certainly very sure process ; and that is, to *write without pay until somebody offers pay.* If nobody offers pay within three years, the candidate may look upon this circumstance with the most implicit confidence as the sign that sawing wood is what he was intended for. If he has any wisdom at all, then he will retire with dignity and assume his heaven-appointed vocation.

In the above remarks I have only offered a course of action which Mr. Dickens and most other successful literary men had to follow ; but it is a course which will find no sympathy with my client, perhaps. The young literary aspirant is a very, very curious creature. He knows that if he wished to become a tinner, the master smith would require him to prove the possession of a good character, and would require him to promise to stay in the shop three years—possibly four,—and would make him sweep out and bring water and build fires all the first year, and let him learn to black stoves in the intervals ; and for these good honest services would pay him two suits of cheap clothes and his board ; and next year he would begin to receive instructions in the trade, and a dollar a week would be added to his emoluments ; and two dollars would be added the third year, and three the fourth ; and *then*, if he had become a first-rate tinner, he would get about fifteen or twenty, or may be thirty dollars a week, with never a possibility of getting seventy-five while he lived. If he wanted to become a mechanic of any other kind, he would have to undergo this same tedious, ill-paid apprenticeship. If he wanted to become

a lawyer or a doctor, he would have fifty times worse; for he would get nothing at all during his long apprenticeship, and in addition would have to pay a large sum for tuition, and have the privilege of boarding and clothing himself. The literary aspirant knows all this, and yet he has the hardihood to present himself for reception into the literary guild and ask to share its high honors and emoluments, without a single twelvemonth's apprenticeship to show in excuse for his presumption! He would smile pleasantly if he were asked to make even so simple a thing as a ten-cent tin dipper without previous instruction in the art; but, all green and ignorant, wordy, pompously assertive, ungrammatical, and with a vague, distorted knowledge of men and the world acquired in a back-country village, he will serenely take up so dangerous a weapon as a pen, and attack the most formidable subject that finance, commerce, war, or politics can furnish him withal. It would be laughable if it were not so sad and so pitiable. The poor fellow would not intrude upon the tin-shop without an apprenticeship, but is willing to seize and wield with unpractised hand an instrument which is able to overthrow dynasties, change religions, and decree the weal or woe of nations.

If my correspondent will write free of charge for the newspapers of his neighborhood, it will be one of the strangest things that ever happened if he does not get all the employment he can attend to on those terms. And as soon as ever his writings are worth money, plenty of people will hasten to offer it.

## CHAPTER III.

### CONCERNING REJECTED MSS.

The neglected genius—Publishers and editors; their liability to mistakes—Story of some rejected MSS.: "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "Vanity Fair," "Eothen," "Tom Jones," Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus," and "French Revolution," etc.

IF Dr. Holmes and Mr. Mark Twain are right, what, it may be asked, has become of that famous doctrine of neglected genius which collectors of literary ana have always been so fond of and have supported by so many illustrative examples? I fancy a candid examination will show that the illustrative examples are not only much fewer in number than is currently believed, but that a large proportion of them belong to a past period and a past condition of things. So far as the present is concerned, the neglected genius must be relegated to the nursery with the dragons and the rocs and the other marvels of fable. The time when men of genius depended upon the capricious patronage of a single nobleman has nothing in common with the present, when the patron is the many-minded public, and the media of communication are the countless newspapers, magazines, and publishing houses which meet all tastes with all kinds of litera-

ture. Nor has the present any thing in common with the times of transition which led up to the present. Every year, in fact, opens out new chances to the man of talent. It is still true that very able men have to struggle up to fame through a wearying obscurity, but that is mainly because most men, even very talented men, during the period of their apprenticeship, turn out only apprentices' work. As soon as they really begin to show what is in them, they are pretty sure of that recognition which Bayard Taylor ranks the highest of all—the recognition of the best minds. And as most people, in matters which lie outside of their intellectual ken, are content to accept the judgment of those whom they esteem experts in their line in preference to their own, it does not take very long for the opinion of the best minds to permeate the mass of the reading public.

In an after-dinner speech, made on some public occasion, Anthony Trollope—now one of the best paid writers in England—drew a graphic sketch of his early struggles in literature, of MSS. declined with or without thanks, of MSS. accepted and not paid for, of MSS. paid for in so miserable and grudging a way that it was worse than no payment at all. The total monetary result of one year's hard work was a little over twelve pounds. But Mr. Trollope omitted to tell us what was the

literary merit of the articles which received this treatment. And Mr. Trollope, in spite of these obstacles, fought his way to final success by sheer force of brains and pluck.

Of course, editors and publishers make mistakes. They would be more than human if they did not. Lawyers, doctors, men of all trades and professions are liable to errors of judgment. Yet, somehow, in some blundering sort, the business of the world goes on, things come right side up at last, and in the main and in the long run the men who deserve to succeed do succeed. The author who has been rejected in one place may find acceptance in another. The literary work which is not suited for one form of publication may be suited for another. "Sartor Resartus," declined by booksellers, was accepted by *Fraser's*. Thackeray's "Hoggarty Diamond," declined by *Fraser's*, was accepted by a bookseller. "When *MacMillan*," says Frederick Locker, "refused 'My Neighbor Rose,' I sent it to the *Cornhill*, and when *Fraser's* declined 'A Nice Correspondent,' I sent it to *St. Paul's*."

The experiences of Trollope have been the experiences of many other, many abler men. It is said that Bret Harte has never known what it is to have an article rejected. If so, he and Charles Dickens are the only authors of this generation who have enjoyed a career of uninterrupted triumph. The

words "Declined with thanks" had no unfamiliar sound to Macaulay, to Carlyle, and to Emerson. Many of the compositions which Thackeray published later in life had been rejected by editors and publishers. Even George Eliot found it difficult to get along until she secured a masculine advocate in George Henry Lewes. Nay, the *Edinburgh Review* itself, that terror of young authors, was started by a number of clever young men who had failed to get a hearing elsewhere, and its first number was largely made up of articles that had seen the inside of more than one editorial sanctum.

The story of all the successful works which originally failed to find a publisher would doubtless fill a book of itself—and a very interesting book it would be. Let us glance at a few of the more famous cases. There is "Uncle Tom's Cabin." "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was refused by publisher after publisher, until finally, in despair, the author sent it to a weekly paper called *The National Era*, issued in Washington. In its serial form it attracted the attention of a firm of struggling young publishers, who wrote to the author offering to bring it out in book form on the usual basis of percentage. The offer was accepted—Mrs. Stowe writing back that she needed a new winter dress, and she hoped the book would bring her in sufficient to buy one. The first check from her publishers was for $10,000.

It is easy to be wise after the event. It is easy in the light of the present to blame the shortsightedness of the publishers who couldn't see a good thing when they had it. But I am not sure that this could, strictly speaking, be numbered among publishers' mistakes. I am not sure that it was not after all good business policy which dictated these refusals. If I were to advise a man not to put his money into a lottery, and, nevertheless, he did so and won, I should still look upon my advice as being good advice. And so with the readers who advised their firm to decline "Uncle Tom's Cabin." As far as human foresight could predict, that book had all the chances against it. The abolitionists were then in an insignificant minority, and the whole sentiment of the country was against them. A book appealing to that small audience, a book shocking the prejudices of the great body of the public, was, one might have thought, foredoomed to defeat. Where the odds were so great it was merely the part of prudence to decline the contest.

And, indeed, the spirit of reckless speculation which we may presume to have been the guiding principle of Mrs. Stowe's publishers, and which served them so well in this instance, in the end proved their ruin. In spite of the tremendous "lift" given them by "Uncle Tom's Cabin," they went into bankruptcy a few years later.

"Jane Eyre" has often been cited as a flagrant instance of the mistakes of publishers. The story of its refusal has gained such headway that it may surprise the reader to know that "Jane Eyre" was never refused by a publisher. An appeal to Mrs. Gaskell's Life will settle this fact. It was Miss Bronté's first novel, "The Professor," that made the round of the publishers, until finally, scored all over with publishers' marks, which the author was too honest to cancel, and nearly worn out by its travels, it found its way into the hands of Smith & Elder. They gave it a careful reading. They saw it was crude and unformed. But they saw also that it was no ordinary hand that had penned it, and they wrote to the author making certain kindly criticisms and suggestions, and asking that they be allowed to see the next work from the same pen. In response "Jane Eyre" was despatched to them a few months later. The reader to whom this MS. was referred was a native of Scotland, a man who to the callousness acquired in his profession added all the proverbial phlegm of his fatherland. He was so aroused and excited that he sat up half the night to finish it. The work was published on his recommendation, and the publishers never had any reason to regret their decision.

The story of "Vanity Fair," however, *is* directly in point. That novel was first refused by a magazine,

and then by the whole tribe of publishers, until the author, in despair, brought it out at his own risk—and realized a fortune on it. Lingard's History was hawked around among the publishers for years before it got into print. Motley's "Rise of the Dutch Republic" was offered in the first place to John Murray. Mr. Murray declined it, and the author brought the book out at his own expense through another house. Its success was decisive from the start. Then publisher and author changed places; Mr. Murray wrote to Mr. Motley, candidly acknowledging his error, and asking to be allowed to publish the historian's next work. Murray almost lost the "Sketch Book" through a similar mistake. He declined it when first offered to him, and Washington Irving then brought it out at his own expense. Before the book was fairly on the market, Irving's publisher failed. Irving, in despair, appealed to Walter Scott, and that gentleman, "more propitious than Hercules," put his shoulder to the wheel. Through his favorable representations, Murray was induced to undertake the future publication of the work which he had previously declined. "From that time," says Irving, "Murray became my publisher, conducting himself in all his dealings with that fair, open, and liberal spirit which had obtained for him the well-merited appellation of the 'Prince of Booksellers.'"

"I happen to know," says an anonymous magazinist, "the secret history of a book which has long since taken its rank among the classics of English literature—I mean 'Eöthen.' It was written years and years before it was published; written with care and thought; revised in the keenest spirit of criticism, and kept under lock and key for a long time. It is a book which, as far as workmanship goes, exemplifies in a very striking form Shenstone's rule for good writing, 'Spontaneous thought, labored expression,' and there are few books of travel which equally abound in adventure, incident, sketches of character, and personal romance. It is, as Lockhart well said, an English classic. But when Alexander Kinglake offered it to the publishers, they refused it one and all, refused it upon any terms, and the author at last, out of conceit with his manuscript and perhaps with himself, walked into a bookseller's shop in Pall Mall, explained the adventures of the manuscript, and made it a present to the publisher if he thought it worth printing. The first edition lingered a little on his hands, till a notice in the *Quarterly Review*, from the pen of Lockhart, called attention to it, and the printer's difficulty after that was to keep pace with the demand. I hope I am not violating any confidence by adding that the publisher, year by year, for many years, sent Mr. Kinglake a check for £100 every Christmas-day."

When Fielding's "Tom Jones" was finished, the author, being at that time pressed for money, offered the MS. to a second-rate publisher for £25. The publisher hesitated and asked a day for consideration. Meeting Thomson, the poet, on his way home, Fielding told him of the transaction. Thomson had read the MS. and knew its merits; he conjured Fielding to be off with the bargain, and offered to find a better purchaser. Next morning Fielding hastened to his appointment, all his apprehensions awakened lest the publisher should accept, as they had previously been lest he should decline, the bargain. To his great joy, however, the ignorant trafficker in literature declined, and returned the MS. to Fielding. With a light heart he set off to his friend Thomson; and the novelist and the poet then went to Andrew Millar, the great publisher of the day. Millar, as was his practice with works of light reading, handed the manuscript to his wife. She read it, and advised him by no means to let it slip through his fingers.

Millar invited the two friends to meet him at a coffee-house in the Strand. After dinner, with great caution, he offered Fielding two hundred pounds for the manuscript. The novelist was amazed at the largeness of the offer. "Then, my good sir," said he, recovering himself from this unexpected stroke of good fortune, "give me your

hand—the book is yours; and, waiter," continued he, "bring a couple of bottles of your best port." Before Millar died, he had cleared eighteen thousand pounds by "Tom Jones," out of which he generously made Fielding various presents, to the amount of two thousand pounds; and, when he died, he bequeathed a handsome legacy to each of Fielding's sons.

A good many years ago, it is said, one of the leading publishers in Paris was offered a manuscript by a pale young man with a large forehead. The publisher glanced over the pages, and saw that the work was in verse. Without attempting to read it, he handed it politely back to the young author with a few of the usual phrases. "Poetry was a drug in the market, business was unusually dull," etc. "I am sorry for your sake," said the young man magnificently; "I was about to propose to you a contract by which I would have secured to you the right to all the future productions of my pen. It was a fortune I was about to offer you. But you refuse, and no more need be said." Struck by his manner, the publisher reflected for a moment, and then hastened after his visitor to call him back. But it was too late; the young man had disappeared. "Never before or since," the old gentleman was wont to say when relating the story, "have I met with a young author who so fully believed in his own

powers, nor with one that had so much reason for such belief, for my visitor was Victor Hugo."

Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus" was refused by all the principal publishers in London and Edinburgh. One of these publishers accompanied his letter of declination with a copy of his reader's opinion, "which," he assured Carlyle, "you may rely upon it, is a just one," as the gentleman was "in the highest class of men of letters." The opinion ran as follows: "The author of *Teufelsdröckh* is a person of talent; his work displays here and there some felicities of thought and expression, considerable fancy and knowledge, but whether or not it would take with the public seems doubtful. For a *jeu d'esprit* of that kind it is too long; it would have suited better as an essay or article than as a volume. The author has no great tact; his wit is frequently heavy, and reminds one of the German baron who took to leaping on tables, and answered that he was learning to be lively. *Is* the work a translation?"

"Sartor" finally made its appearance in *Fraser's Magazine*. The British public received it coldly. The British critic called it a mass of clotted nonsense. But in America its genius was recognized at once. To America belongs the honor of having first brought the work out in book form—in a pirated edition of course, but then the enterprise and literary foresight are none the less remarkable. The

book succeeded here; it was a failure in England when finally published there. So it is no wonder that when "The French Revolution" was, a few years later, offered to John Murray he "declined it with thanks." Before the MS. could be sent elsewhere, a sad accident occurred. It had been lent to John Stuart Mill, who, in turn, lent it to a friend.

"This person [as Carlyle said recently, when giving an account of the mishap] sat up perusing it far into the wee hours of the morning, and at length recollecting himself, surprised at the flight of time, laid the MS. carelessly upon the library table, and hied to bed. There it lay, a loose heap of rubbish, fit only for the waste-paper basket or for the grate. So Betty, the housemaid, thought when she came to light the library fire in the morning. Looking around for something suitable for her purpose, and finding nothing better than that, she thrust it into the grate, and applying the match, up the chimney, with a sparkle and roar, went 'The French Revolution'; thus ending in smoke and soot, as the great transaction itself did more than a half-century ago. At first they forbore to tell me the evil tidings; but at length I heard the dismal story, and I was as a man staggered by a heavy blow. * * * I was as a man beside myself, for there was scarcely a page of MS. left. I sat down at the table and strove to collect my thoughts, and to commence the work again. I filled page after page, but ran the pen over every line as the page finished. Thus was it for many a weary day, until at last, as I sat by the window half-hearted, and de-

jected, my eye wandered along over acres of roofs, I saw a man standing upon a scaffold, engaged in building a wall—the wall of a house. With his trowel he would lay a great splash of mortar upon the last layer, and then brick after brick would be deposited upon this, striking each with the butt of his trowel, as if to give it his benediction and farewell; and all the while singing or whistling as blithe as a lark. And in my spleen I said within myself, 'Poor lad! how canst thou be so merry under such a bile-spotted atmosphere as this, and every thing rushing into the regions of the inane?' And then I bethought me, and I said to myself, 'Poor fool thou, rather, that sittest here by the window whining and complaining. What if thy house of cards falls? Is the universe wrecked for that? The man yonder builds a house that shall be a home for generations. Men will be born in it, wedded in it, and buried from it; and the voice of weeping and of mirth shall be heard within its walls; and mayhap true valor, prudence, and faith shall be nursed by its hearth-stone. Man! symbol of eternity imprisoned into time! it is not thy works, which are all mortal, infinitely little, and the greatest no greater than the least, but only the spirit thou workest in, which can have worth or continuance. Up, then, at thy work, and be cheerful.' So I arose and washed my face, and felt that my head was anointed, and gave myself to relaxation—to what they call 'light literature.' I read nothing but novels for weeks. I was surrounded by heaps of rubbish and chaff. I read all the novels of that person who was once a captain in the Royal Navy—an extraordinary ornament he

must have been to it; the man that wrote stories about dogs that had their tails cut off, and about people in search of their fathers, and it seemed to me that of all the extraordinary dunces that had figured upon the planet he must certainly bear the palm from every one save the readers of his books. And thus refreshed I took heart of grace again, applied me to my work, and in course of time 'The French Revolution' got finished—as all things must sooner or later."

But it was easier to reproduce the lost MS. out of chaos than to get it into print. "All manner of perplexities," writes Carlyle to his friend Napier, "have occurred in the publishing of my poor book—so the MS., like an unhappy ghost, still lingers on the wrong side of Styx. The Charon of Albemarle Street durst not risk it in his *sutilis cymba*. So it leaped ashore again. Better days," he adds, hopefully, "are coming, and new trials will end more happily." But his next letter shows that his hopes had been dashed to the ground again. "The book trade," he says, "is dead, or in a state of suspended animation. The aspect of that world fills me with shuddering admiration. I think I must even stick my own little book in my pocket." And, finally, in February of next year, he writes despairingly, "I have quite given up the notion of hawking my little MS. book about any further."

The book was eventually published in 1837. Its

reception by the British public justified the business sagacity of the publishers who had rejected it. Carlyle, in 1838, said to Mr. Sumner, that the strangest thing in the history of literature was his recent receipt of £50 from America, on account of his "French Revolution," which had never yielded him a farthing in Europe, and probably never would.

The troubles of an author do not always end with the acceptance of his MS. In a preface to his collected stories, when they appeared in London, Bret Harte gives the history of "The Luck of Roaring Camp." He wrote that famous story after becoming editor of the *Overland Monthly*. He had not received the proof-sheets when he was suddenly summoned to the office of the publisher, whom he found to be the picture of anxiety, indecision, and dismay. It then appeared that the foreman of the printing-office had taken the liberty of sending the proof to the publisher, instead of the author, "because the matter thereof was so indecent, irreligious, and improper," that the proof-reader, a young woman, had with great difficulty been persuaded to finish it. The foreman had deemed it his duty, under the circumstances, to inform his friend the publisher of the dangerous tendencies of the new editor. Harte did not, as may be supposed, agree with the foreman. He even had the audacity to

believe and assert that he had as just an idea of what should go into the magazine as a man who was not, and never had been, an editor. The publisher was in a quandary. Finally, however, he decided to leave the question at issue to some of his and the editor's journalistic and literary friends. They could not agree. Some thought it excellent, others that it would kill the periodical. The publisher, after a long talk with Harte, took his view, and admitted the story. When it appeared in the *Monthly*, the local press, although California journals are not usually regarded as very squeamish, objected to its moral tone generally, and to many of its details, as very gross. But the Eastern journals held other opinions. They recognized its freshness, vigor, and originality; it was widely copied in the Middle States and in New England, and the "Luck of Roaring Camp" proved to be Bret Harte's luck also. It introduced him to the nation; it was the beginning of his literary fame; invitations poured in upon him from Eastern publishers to furnish something of the same sort for them. Since then his pen has always been in active demand at handsome prices.

Wordsworth's first venture was a volume of "Lyrical Ballads," written in conjunction with Coleridge. One evening, while the book was running through the press, a friend came to him with

a very grave face, and said, "Wordsworth, I have seen the volume that you and Coleridge are about to publish. There is one poem in it which I earnestly entreat you will cancel, for, if published, it will make you everlastingly ridiculous." Wordsworth thanked him for the interest he took in the matter, and begged to know the title of the unfortunate piece. He named "We are Seven," the only poem of the whole number which became instantly popular on publication.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE REWARDS OF LITERATURE.

Literary honors and pecuniary returns; Views of Dr. Holland and Bayard Taylor quoted and discussed; Fortunes won by the pen.

EDITORS and publishers are only middlemen. They are caterers to the public, whose taste it is their primary aim to gratify. In the last analysis it is the public, therefore, to which the author must shape his appeals, and which is responsible for the meed of approbation his labors receive.

A great many hard things have been said against the public, particularly by that class of writers who consider themselves neglected geniuses,—the class who, in William Black's words, assume their genius in order to prove the neglect. But it is about time to have done with this nonsense. The public is, in the main, a good-humored monster which is inclined to be neither unjust nor ungenerous. It is dull sometimes; it is not always quick at detecting merit, but it is always glad and eager to lay its rewards at the feet of merit when once it has been discovered and acknowledged. A public which at

once, and without waiting for the prompting of the critics, took to its heart such writers as Scott, and Byron, and Dickens, and Irving, and Tennyson, and Ruskin, has some claim to literary insight. And a good word also should be said for a public which has taught itself to read and admire Carlyle, Emerson, and George Eliot. Whatever may have been the governing impulse, whether it were spontaneous admiration for the work or obedience to the voice of competent criticism, a generation which buys up one hundred thousand copies of "Middlemarch" is certainly not niggardly in substantial marks of recognition for the highest order of genius.

Mr. J. G. Holland has a very sensible article upon the subject in one of his *Scribner* editorials, from which I take the liberty of quoting:

> The literary man who complains of lack of popular consideration and social reward for his labor, is, by rule, the man who has not comprehended the wants of his time, and has simply sought to serve himself. To complain of lack of public reward for the service of one's self is certainly childish; yet the great mass of literary men in America who find fault with their winnings is made up of these. Those who are not up to their time, though they mean well, fail of necessity. Those who are above or beyond their time fail, perhaps, in a certain way, but, after all, the world knows enough to know who they are, and accredits them often with more than belongs to them.

Emerson has a world of honor from men who do not pretend to understand him.

Every literary man, by virtue of his constitution, owes a duty to his generation and his time ; and if, comprehending that duty, he performs it well, he has no stint of honor. There is no man around whom gathers so much interest, admiration, affection, and respect, as around him who charms, teaches, and inspires by his literary work. The young man who boasted that he once saw a railroad train passing, in one car of which sat Charles Dickens, and who felt exalted by the thought that, though he had never looked upon his face, he had seen the car that held him, illustrates the enthusiastic affection in which eminent literary men are held. They are kings by right. Their kingdom may not be strictly of this world of titles, and dignities, and palaces, and lands, but it is a veritable kingdom, which holds only loyal subjects. The literary man who would not rather be Walter Scott than the Napoleon whom he described, or Thackeray than the Emperor William, or Charles Dickens than the Prince of Wales, or Mrs. Browning than the Queen of England, or Washington Irving than Gen. Jackson, or William Cullen Bryant than General Grant, is a disgrace to his craft, undeserving of any literary reward, and incapable of winning one.

This admitted, it is idle to talk of the inadequacy of literary rewards, so far as the social and personal honors of the world are concerned. They are abundant, and above all titular honors, all wealth, all official position. Mr. Everett is remembered to-day, not as our minister to

England, but as an orator. Mr. Bancroft retires honorably from his Prussian mission, but Mr. Bancroft, the historian, has conferred more honor upon his office than the office has conferred upon him. The principal distinction that has ever come to the Liverpool consulate has come through Mr. Hawthorne's occupation of it. Names like those of Franklin, Adams, and Motley are those almost alone which have saved the bureaus of our diplomatic foreign service from absolute contempt. A hundred ordinary politicians come, go, and are forgotten; but glory lingers around the chairs once occupied by men whom office could not honor.

It is true, of course, that a temporary notoriety may be won by striking a popular vein, or even by mere literary quackery which may for the present seem quite to overshadow books of a higher and more earnest aim. But notoriety is very different from fame. Ephemera meet only with an ephemeral sale. The solid reputations are not carved out by quacks. The nine days' wonder becomes a very tame thing in a fortnight. It may be true that the sales of "That Husband of Mine" mounted up into the tens of thousands, while its cotemporary "The American" could only count its thousands. But nobody, not even the most enthusiastic admirer of the former, would have put the two books upon the same intellectual plane. One hit a temporary fancy and passed away with the fancy, the other won for

its author a distinguished position in the world of letters.

Still, this is only one side of the question. Pudding as well as praise must fall to the author's lot. "Food and raiment must be given him, or he dies." As the philosophic Sam Slick points out, he "can't live upon nothin' but air, like a chameleon, though he can change color as often as that little critter does." And when he touches upon this question of the pecuniary rewards of authorship, even Dr. Holland's spirits forsake him.

"The great lack of reward to literary labor," he goes on to say in the article from which I have already quoted, "is in the matter of money. Not one author in twenty can live on his authorial earnings. We speak of this country of cheap books. We have altogether too many men who are still drudging for the bread that feeds themselves and their families, though they have done good, marketable literary work all their lives. Copyright is contemptibly small. We do not mean that publishers make too much, but that the books are sold so cheap that neither publishers nor authors can get a fair living. The consumers of books must remember that out of every dollar they pay for a copyrighted book, the writer gets but ten cents, and that publishers would be quite willing, as a rule, to share the losses and gains of publication with the au-

thors. If copyright were double what it is, authors could not get a living exclusively by authorship."

In an equally despondent vein, Mr. Bayard Taylor—and surely there have been few more successful littérateurs than he in this country—wrote to one of the Western papers some few years before the end of his busy and useful life:

If you could in some way help to make people understand that no author who is not independently rich can possibly respond to the claims made upon him—and that wealth is never attained in this country, or perhaps any other, by the highest, purest, and most permanent form of literary labor—you will do a real service to our guild. Emerson is now seventy-four years old, and his last volume is the only one which has approached remunerative sale. Bryant is in his eighty-third year, and he could not buy a modest house with all he ever received in his life from his poems. Washington Irving was nearly seventy years old before the sale of his works at home met the expenses of his simple life at Sunnyside. I have had no reason to complain of the remuneration formerly derived from those works which I know to possess slight literary value. But the translation of "Faust," to which I gave all my best and freshest leisure during a period of six or seven years, has only yielded me about as much as a fortnight's lecturing. I have spent two or three years in collecting the material and making the preparatory studies for a new biography of Goethe, and I have been waiting

two years longer for the fitting leisure to begin the work. In order to undertake it I must own my time in advance. No matter how successful it might be considered, it could not possibly bring me more than a tithe of the amount which drudgery for the markets of literature would return, in the same time. I foresee that I shall finally be obliged to return to Cedarcroft to write the biography. If all this interruption and consequent wear and tear won't let me alone, I must get out of its way. When I happen to speak of it, people innocently say, "Why don't you keep a secretary?" Great heavens! I'd rather take a secretary's salary and buy up two or three months of my own time. Some critics have charged me with attempting too much—trying too many fields. *Trying?*—when it was a matter of sheer necessity! I should only be too happy, if I were in a condition to give up every thing but the one path of literary labor which I know was designed for me—if any ever was

We have been so determinedly looking upon the sunny side of the picture that it would not do to give up now. Let us see if we cannot find a sunny side here too. And, first, I do not think it would be fair for an author to expect to be paid as well as a shopkeeper, or a broker. Literature is usually held to be more honorable, as it is certainly more interesting, than a good many other occupations. It is a maxim of political economy that employments

which have these advantages are less lucrative than other kinds of business more irksome or less respectable. Still, an author has a right to expect something. Let us see if he gets that something. "Wealth," says Mr. Taylor, "is never attained by the highest, purest, and most permanent form of literary labor." At the same time he acknowledges that he has no reason to complain of the remuneration derived from literary drudgery. Very well; but is this a singularity of the literary life? Is not substantially the same true of every other profession? It is by his brilliant forensic speeches that Mr. Cato T. C. Jones wins the ear of the public, but he depends upon the daily drudgery at the office for the wherewithal to clothe Mrs. Jones and to feed the little Joneses. And the learned treatise which extends the fame of Dr. Æ. Smith beyond the confines of his native heath is not likely to bring him in such cash returns as will remunerate him for the time and labor spent upon it. Indirectly indeed, both in the case of Mr. Jones and Dr. Smith, the fame so acquired will be of money value to them by drumming up clients and patients—by bringing them in more of that drudgery to which they look for their living, and by enabling them to charge larger fees for their services. Now the same is, in a measure, true of literature. A work of permanent literary value may not, as Bayard Tay-

lor urges, reap a golden harvest from its sales. But it establishes the author's reputation upon a solid basis. And a reputation so won opens out to him all sorts of chances for turning an honest penny. Mr. Taylor himself is an example of this. The best part of his fame may have been earned by works whose actual returns were rather in praise than in pudding. But the praise brought with it the opportunities of obtaining pudding. The metropolitan journals were glad to secure his services in editorial berths, with a comfortable salary attachment. Lecture bureaus were eager to engage him. Publishers came to him with all sorts of hack-work when they found that his name upon a title-page commanded attention. His reputation made him free of the magazines, and immensely raised the commercial value of his articles. "Carl Benson," a magazinist of some note in his day, has an apposite anecdote. "Once on a time," he says, "a publisher of an illustrated paper offered me $50 for the use of my name—that 's what it amounted to. As the paper was respectable, and my circumstances just then made it convenient enough to receive that sum for a few hours' work of my own choosing, I accepted. I met Bayard Taylor, who was also in that omnibus, and asked him out of curiosity, 'How much did C— give you for the use of your name?' 'One hundred and fifty.' 'Well,' said I, 'now we may

reckon our respective values by the mercantile test: C. Benson $= \frac{\text{B. Taylor}}{3}$." And, further, it should not be forgotten that the diplomatic position which would have afforded him the leisure, had his life been spared, for writing his contemplated life of Goethe, was bestowed upon him as a recognition of his literary services. So that Taylor's was even in a commercial sense a successful career. And he was not a man of genius, only an able workman in the intellectual sphere which he had chosen for himself, —not any abler, I suspect, than many lawyers and doctors are in *their* specialty, whose names have not half so loud a ring to them. Probably he would have made more money if he had expended the same amount of brain-power in one or the other of these professions, but he would not have been nearly so famous. And he valued fame more than he did money.

As to what Mr. Taylor says about other writers: Washington Irving received altogether some $250,000 for his works, and, besides that, the country honored itself by appointing him to a number of diplomatic positions, whose worth could be reckoned in dollars and cents: Bryant's fame as a poet was no doubt of considerable commercial value to him as the editor and proprietor of the New York *Evening Post*, and Emerson has not

made money principally because he doesn't care for it,—he values riches no more than the popular applause which he has won almost against his will. He is like Agassiz, who replied to the magnificent overtures of a popular lecture committee, that he had not the time to make money. A noble answer certainly, and the man who was capable of making it would not be likely to complain of any lack of the pecuniary rewards which he voluntarily surrendered. So Coleridge, on being offered a half share in the *Morning Post and Courier*, with a prospect of two thousand pounds a year, announced that he would not give up country life and the lazy reading of old folios for two thousand times that income. "In short," he added, "beyond three hundred pounds a year, I regard money as a real evil." D'Alembert, again, when in the receipt of a very limited income—half of which he gave away in charity—declined an invitation from Frederick the Great to come and reside with him at Berlin, where honors and wealth awaited him, and another from the Empress Catherine, who offered him a salary of one hundred thousand livres. And Spinoza, who was then living on six sous a day, refused a present of two thousand florins on the ground that the possession of so much money would distract him from his studies and occupations. Of course it is not the fault of

the world, or of their calling in life, that characters of such sturdy independence do not win the things which they despise.

I have been taking the quotations from Bayard Taylor as a sort of text to hang a discussion upon. There is one more question I would like to consider before I have done with him. Is Mr. Taylor right in laying it down as a broad general principle that wealth is *never* reached by the production of literature of permanent value? Of course opinions may differ as to what is wealth as well as to what is permanent value in literature, so that we must take the popular standards for both. Tennyson receives from his publishers an annual income of about $20,000. In addition to this, the magazines are willing to pay fabulous prices for his poems. The verses beginning

> "What does little birdie say
> In her bed at peep of day?"

were bought by a periodical for $40 a line. The *Nineteenth Century* gave £300 for "The Ballad of the Revenge." Robert Bonner, of the *Ledger*, paid $5,000 for "The May Queen." The publishers of the *Cornhill Magazine* gave George Eliot $75,000 for "Romola." To be sure, they lost on the venture, but more than twice that amount was paid for "Middlemarch"—Harper & Bros. themselves are

reported to have given $40,000 for the American priority,—and that book coined money for all concerned in its publication. Both Scott and Dickens won for themselves a grand total of something like a million of dollars with no other capital to start on than an ink-bottle and a pen. The first check which the Longmans handed over to Macaulay on account of copyright for the "History of England" was for £20,000. The check is preserved as a curiosity among the archives of the Longmans' firm. And the history is still selling—at the rate, it is said, of some seventy copies a week—and copyright money is still pouring into the coffers of Macaulay's heirs. Victor Hugo received $80,000 for "Les Misérables" and corresponding sums for his other works. Eugene Scribe is said to have left an estate of nearly $1,000,000. France, indeed, is the El-Dorado of writers. George Sand, Alexander Dumas, nearly all of the leading writers of fiction amassed wealth by their labors.

In America, it must be acknowledged that the literary market has never yielded such liberal returns to producers. The want of any international copyright and the consequent facilities for pirating English books are of course to blame for this. The quarter of a million earned in his lifetime by Irving was perhaps as large an amount as was ever realized in this country for work of standard literary value. Feni-

more Cooper may have made the same—he certainly did not make more. But Hawthorne's annual income from those fictions which represent the high-water mark of American literature never seems to have exceeded a couple of thousand dollars. To be sure, his appointment to the consulship at Liverpool, with its enormous perquisites, was an indirect result of his literary distinction. And, indeed, in reckoning up the gains of authors in this country, it should not be left out of mind that Uncle Sam has been unusually generous in his selections from the literary class when making up his list of foreign representatives. Besides Hawthorne—Irving, Taylor, Lowell, Bancroft, Motley, Howells, and Bret Harte, are a few names that spring up to mind at once. But to go on with our computation, most of the captains of literature as well as many of the subalterns, have drawn at least a comfortable subsistence from their profession. Motley is said to have received copyright amounting to $60,000 for his history. Prescott's income from his books was some $5,000 a year. Mrs. Stowe received $40,000 for Uncle Tom's Cabin—it is impossible to estimate how much that sum might have been swelled if an international copyright law had been in existence—and her other books have sold remuneratively. Mrs. Augusta Evans Wilson has cleared $100,000 in eight years out of her novels. Dr. Holland is said

to have received $12,000 for "Bitter Sweet," $8,000 for "Katrina," and $5,000 for the "Mistress of the Manse." *Scribner's Monthly* paid Bret Harte $1,000 for his short story "An Episode of Fiddletown," and $10,000 for "Gabriel Conroy," and he retained the right to publish them subsequently in book form. And as to Mark Twain, it is well known that that genial gentleman has found a bonanza mine in literature—$300,000 has been named as the sum realized from "The Innocents Abroad"—as well as in the drama.

## CHAPTER V.

### LITERATURE AS A STAFF.

Literature and business—Elia on dependence upon booksellers—Washington Irving's advice to his nephew—Coleridge's affectionate exhortation to young authors—A literary lawyer.

"LITERATURE," said Scott, "is an excellent staff, but a poor crutch," meaning by that, it might be made an useful auxiliary but not a permanent support. A laureate of the last century, in his "Charge to Poets," gives similar advice:

> "If nature prompts you, or if friends persuade,
> Why write, but ne'er pursue it as a trade."

When Madame de Staël lamented that Campbell's poverty unsettled his mind so that he could not write, Samuel Rogers asked why he did not take the situation of a clerk. He could then compose verses in his leisure hours. "This answer," says the banker poet, "was reckoned very cruel both by Madame de Staël and Mackintosh; but there was really kindness as well as truth in it. When literature is the sole business of life, it becomes a drudgery; when

we are able to resort to it only at certain hours, it is a charming relaxation. In my earlier days I was a banker's clerk, obliged to be at the desk every day from ten till five o'clock; and I shall never forget the delight with which, on returning home, I used to read and write during the evening." Robert Southey himself, even while acknowledging his choice of literature for a profession to have been that to which he owed the happiness of his life, the esteem in which he was held, and that in which he confidently believed he should be held hereafter, speaks of it in a letter to Mr. Wynn, as late as 1835, as "the one great imprudence" of his life, nay, more, as "the greatest which any man can commit." Béranger's advice was emphatically given: "Write if you will, versify if you must, sing away if the singing mood is an imperative mood, but on no account give up your regular business; let your authorship be a pastime, not a trade, your avocation, not your vocation."

Bernard Barton, a poet who has written at least one poem—"To the Evening Primrose"—which will probably outlive the century, was at one time so well pleased with some minor successes that he announced an intention of giving up his clerkship in a bank for a literary career. But his author friends were unanimous in condemning the idea. "Do not renounce writing," counselled Byron, "but never

trust entirely to authorship. If you have a profession, retain it; it will be, like Priori's fellowship, a last and sure resource." Charles Lamb was especially vehement in the expression of his disapproval:

Throw yourself on the world [cries Elia] without any rational plan of support beyond what the chance employ of booksellers would afford you ! ! !

Throw yourself rather, my dear sir, from the steep Tarpeian rock, slap-dash headlong upon iron spikes. If you have but five consolatory minutes between the desk and the bed, make much of them, and live a century in them, rather than turn slave to the booksellers. They are Turks and Tartars when they have poor authors at their beck. Hitherto you have been at arm's length from them. Come not within their grasp. I have known many authors want for bread—some repining—others enjoying the blest security of a counting-house—all agreeing they had rather have been tailors, weavers—what not?—rather than the things they were. I have known some starved, some to go mad, one dear friend literally dying in a workhouse. O, you know not, may you never know ! the miseries of subsisting by authorship ! 'T is a pretty appendage to a situation like yours or mine; but a slavery, worse than all slavery, to be a bookseller's dependant, to drudge your brains for pots of ale and breasts of mutton, to change your free thoughts and voluntary numbers for ungracious task-work.

Keep to your bank, and the bank will keep you. Trust not to the public; you may hang, starve, drown yourself

for any thing that worthy personage cares. I bless every star that Providence, not seeing good to make me independent, has seen it next good to settle me upon the stable foundation of Leadenhall. Sit down, good B. B., in the banking office ; what ! is there not from six to eleven P.M., six days in the week, and is there not all Sunday ? Fie, what a superfluity of man's time, if you could think so ! Enough for relaxation, mirth, converse, poetry, good thoughts, quiet thoughts. Oh, the corroding, torturing, tormenting thoughts that disturb the brain of the unlucky wight who must draw upon it for daily sustenance ! Henceforth I retract all my fond complaints of mercantile employment—look upon them as lovers' quarrels. I was but half in earnest. Welcome dead timber of a desk that gives me life ! A little grumbling is a wholesome medicine for the spleen, but in my inner heart do I approve and embrace this our close but unharassing way of life.

As a complement to Lamb's letter, here is what Washington Irving, one of the most successful professional writers that our country has ever produced, had to say in regard to literature as a profession. The passage occurs in a letter to one of his nephews who had been dabbling in letters :

I hope your literary vein has been a transient one, and that you are preparing to establish your fortune and reputation on a better basis than literary success. I hope none of those whose interest and happiness are dear to

me will be induced to follow my footsteps, and wander into the seductive but treacherous paths of literature. There is no life more precarious in its profits and fallacious in its enjoyments than that of an author. I speak from an experience which may be considered a favorable and prosperous one; and I would earnestly dissuade all those with whom my voice has any effect from trusting their fortunes to the pen: for my part, I look forward with impatience to the time when a moderate competency will place me above the necessity of writing for the press. I have long since discovered that it is indeed vanity and vexation of spirit. I feel myself called upon to urge these matters: because, from passages in your letter, it would seem that some idle writing of mine had caught your fancy, and awakened a desire to follow my footsteps. If you think my path has been a flowery one, you are greatly mistaken; it has too often lain among thorns and brambles, and been darkened by care and despondency. Many and many a time have I regretted that at my early outset in life I had not been imperiously bound down to some regular and useful mode of life, and been thoroughly inured to habits of business; and I have a thousand times regretted with bitterness that I was ever led away by my imagination. Believe me, the man who earns his bread by the sweat of his brow eats often a sweeter morsel, however coarse, than he who procures it by the labor of his brains. I am anxious to hear of your making a valuable practical man of business, whatever profession and mode of life you adopt. Our country is a glorious one for merit to make its way in; and

wherever talents are properly matured, and are supported by honorable principle and amiable manners, they are sure to succeed. As for the talk about modest merit being neglected, it is too often a cant, by which indolent and irresolute men seek to lay their want of success at the door of the public. Modest merit is too apt to be inactive, or negligent, or uninstructed merit. Well-matured and well-disciplined talent is always sure of a market, provided it exerts itself; but it must not cower at home and expect to be sought for. There is a good deal of cant, too, in the whining about the success of forward and impudent men, while men of retiring worth are passed over with neglect. But it happens often that those forward men have that valuable quality of promptness and activity, without which worth is a mere inoperative property. A barking dog is often more useful than a sleeping lion.

At the period of her greatest success, Miss Mitford, in her correspondence, is constantly bewailing the hardships of her lot. "Since I have become a professed authoress," she cries, "woe is me! A washerwoman hath a better trade." Again, "I write merely for remuneration; and I would rather scrub floors, if I could get as much by that healthier, more respectable, and more feminine employment." And still again: "I myself hate all my own doings [in literature], and consider the being forced to this drudgery as the greatest misery that life can afford. But it is my wretched fate, and must be undergone

—so long, at least, as my father is spared to me. If I should have the misfortune to lose him, I shall go quietly to the workhouse, and never write another line—a far preferable destiny."

The German Herder, "with the greatest possible solicitude," advises all men to avoid authorship: "Too early or immoderately employed, it makes the head waste and the heart empty; even were there no other worse consequences, a person who reads only to print in all probability reads amiss; and he who sends away through the pen and press every thought the moment it occurs to him, will, in a short time, have sent away all, and will become a mere journeyman of the printing-office—a compositor."

Ellesmere, of *Friends in Council*, pronounces authorship to be the last trade he should think of taking up. Sooner would he elect to be one of those men who carry advertising boards, like tabards, behind and before them, and whose only duty is to perambulate crowded thoroughfares in long line. "This would be very superior to making a living by literature. . . . If any ideas came into my head during the long walk of the day, I could put them down in the evening, and publish them if I liked; but I should not expect to live or thrive by so doing."

And his friend Milverton, in response, gives

this as the sum and substance of all that he has to say upon the subject: that literature does not hold out any safe reward; and that if he were advising any person whose heart was set upon such things as reward, he should perhaps agree with Ellesmere in recommending a tabard-bearer's life, as likely to be more advantageous than a literary one. For himself, he should prefer sweeping a crossing; but that is mere matter of taste.

What, then, is a writer to do?—cast away his pen and take to pegging shoes? By no means. Let him peg shoes if he can make a livelihood at it, and occupy his leisure time in writing if he feels inclination for it. Such is the advice which most professional authors disgusted with their profession would give. In his "Biographia Literaria," Coleridge addresses what he calls "an affectionate exhortation to those who are looking to literature as a livelihood," from which I make a few extracts:

With no other privilege than that of sympathy and sincere good wishes, I would address an affectionate exhortation to the youthful literati, grounded on my own experience. It will be but short; for the beginning, middle, and end converge to one charge: *never pursue literature as a trade.* With the exception of one extraordinary man [Robert Southey] I never knew an individual, least of all an individual of genius, healthy or happy without a profession, that is, some regular employment which

does not depend on the will of the moment, and which can be carried on so far mechanically that an average quantum only of health, spirits, and intellectual exertion are requisite to its faithful discharge. Three hours of leisure, unalloyed by any alien anxiety, and looked forward to with delight as a change and recreation, will suffice to realize in literature a larger product of what is truly genial, than weeks of compulsion. Money and immediate reputation form only an arbitrary and accidental end of literary labor. The hope of increasing them by any given exertion will often prove a stimulant to industry ; but the necessity of acquiring them will, in all works of genius, convert the stimulus into a narcotic. Motives by excess reverse their very nature, and, instead of exciting, stun and stupefy the mind.

My dear young friend, suppose yourself established in any honorable occupation. From the manufactory or counting-house, from the law court, or from having visited your last patient, you return at evening—

> Dear tranquil time when the sweet sense of Home
> Is sweetest—

your family prepared for its social enjoyments, with the very countenances of your wife and children brightened and their voice of welcome made doubly welcome by the knowledge that, as far as *they* are concerned, you have satisfied the demands of the day by the labor of the day. Then, when you retire into your study, in the books on your shelves you revisit so many venerable friends with whom you can converse, your own spirit scarcely less

free from personal anxiety than the great minds that in those books are still living for you! Even your writing-desk, with its blank paper and all its other implements, will appear as a chain of flowers, capable of linking your feelings as well as thoughts to events and characters, past or to come; not a chain of iron which binds you down to think of the future and the remote by recalling the claims and feelings of the peremptory present. But why should I say *retire?* The habits of active life and daily intercourse with the stir of the world will tend to give you such self-command that the presence of your family will be no interruption. Nay, the social silence or undisturbing voices of a wife or sister will be like a restorative atmosphere, or soft music which moulds a dream without becoming its object. If facts are required to prove the possibility of combining weighty performances in literature with full and independent employment, the works of Cicero and Xenophon among the ancients, of Sir Thomas More, Bacon, Baxter, or, to refer at once to later and contemporary instances, Darwin and Roscoe, are at once decisive of the question.

Whatever the profession or trade chosen, the advantages are many and important compared with the state of a mere literary man who, in any degree, depends upon the sale of his works for the necessaries and comforts of life. In the former a man lives in sympathy with the world in which he lives. At least he acquires a better and quicker tact for the knowledge of that with which men in general can sympathize. He learns to manage his genius more prudently and efficaciously. To these

advantages I will venture to add a superior chance of happiness in domestic life, were it only that it is as natural for the man to be out of the circle of his household during the day, as it is meritorious for the woman to remain for the most part within it. Instead of the vehement and almost slanderous dehortation from marriage which the misogyne Boccaccio addresses to literary men, I would substitute the simple advice: Be not solely a man of letters! Let literature be an honorable augmentation to your arms, but not constitute the coat, or fill the escutcheon.

It may be objected, however, that Coleridge's is a mere fancy picture, that his views are valueless because he had no practical experience of that whereof he talked. Here, however, is a corroborative statement from one who has tried it, and who consequently has a solid basis of fact to stand upon. It is the advice of a young lawyer who has managed to blend literature with his law, and has found the issue to be cheerfulness and substantial comfort. I extract from the Contributors' Club of the *Atlantic Monthly*:

Law and literature act as foils to one another. If my whole time were devoted to the former I should weary of it at last; while the nervous strain of constant imaginative writing would be far from healthy. The one brings you into contact with practical men, practical business, and *very* practical, hard, logical knocks; the other makes

your statements exact and neat, polishes even extemporaneous sentences, and lends a zest to life. I find the effects of my poetry in my arguments, and the effects of my arguments in my poetry, and both are benefited by the exchange. Best of all, literary work retains for me all the delightful freshness of thirteen years ago. I come from toils which I like to those which I passionately love. Now my suggestion is, not that all literary men should turn lawyers or solicitors of patents. But I think it would be far better for them and for their art if more of them would make their living in some way wholly unconnected with literature. The staff that is steadily leaned on will most likely bend in time, and who would not rather pick berries with our friends the woodland darkies, than write puffs, advertisements, and lampoons for a livelihood, or scramble to be first in at a murder?

## CHAPTER VI.

### LITERATURE AS A CRUTCH.

Literature as a business—Chances offered by it for material and intellectual advancement—Opinion of E. C. Stedman quoted and discussed—G. W. Curtis on the literary value of professional work—James Payn on journalism and its opportunities.

THERE are two sides, however, to every question—else what would become of our lawyers and our theologians?

The views given in our last chapter must not be received as final. Objections, indeed, are likely to suggest themselves to even a cursory reader. There is something uncommonly *naif*, for instance, in Coleridge's suggestion that a man of letters should seek out some employment that would support him and allow him to devote three hours a day to more congenial pursuits. Employments of that kind are not to be had for the seeking. They fall to the lot of very few people in this world. To the majority of men, the struggle for even a subsistence is apt to be a severe one, taxing the best energies of the mind and claiming an undivided attention. Such a struggle is not calculated to leave either leisure or

serious inclination for other pursuits, the more so as it bears hardest on those who have not their heart in their work,—those with whom the effort is most against the grain. In spite of all examples to the contrary, I fear that most men who strive to devote to literature hours snatched from the intervals of business, will find themselves unable to do justice to what abilities they may possess. "I have known a writer," says Mr. Edmund C. Stedman, and it is probably his own experience that he is giving, "I have known a writer who deliberately left the editorial profession, for which he was adapted both by taste and vocation, and took up a pursuit which bore no relation to letters; hoping that authorship would proffer him thenceforth the freshness of variety, that upon occasion of loss or trouble it might be his solace and recompense, and that, with a less jaded brain, what writing he could accomplish would be of a more enduring kind. It is so true, however, that one nail drives out another! As an editor, this person was unable to do any thing beyond his newspaper work; as a business man, with not the soundest health, and with his heart, of course, not fully in his occupation, he found himself neither at ease in his means, nor able to gain sturdier hours for literature than vigorous journalist-authors filch from recreation and sleep." In Mr. Stedman's opinion, the

only hope for the æsthetic writer is to be born rich, or with an income sufficient, at least, "when added to the stipend earned by first-class work," to enable him to follow art without harassment. "For want of such a resource, poets, with their delicate temperaments, may struggle along from year to year, composing at intervals which other men devote to social enjoyment, rarely doing their best, possibly with masterpieces stifled in their brains till the creative period is ended, misjudged by those whom they most respect, and vexed with thoughts of what they *could* perform, if sacred common duties were not so incumbent upon them." This is all very well. It may be a pity, in some special cases undoubtedly it *is* a pity, that the higher sort of men of letters, men of lofty aims and fine abilities, should not be placed above the vulgar necessities of life (though Thackeray, as we have seen, thought otherwise); but in any event it is idle to be quarrelling with the inevitable. We must take the world as it is, not as we think it ought to be. And, looking the truth fairly in the face, are things really so hopeless for the man of letters as Mr. Stedman's complaint would imply? The facts quoted in a former chapter show, I think, that it is possible to earn not only a livelihood, but a comfortable competence, and even a small fortune, by "first-class" literary work. Some of the greatest

men in literature have been professional men of letters, supporting themselves by their pen.

"Those who hold," says Mr. Curtis, "that an author should write, as they say, only when he feels the inspiration, forget that genius and talent are perpetual powers; that they are symbolized not by a mountain stream, which is now swollen by showers to a torrent and is then dry, but by a perpetual spring. Thomas Hood is the familiar modern example of the author ground to death in the terrible mill of regular work. But we have Thackeray's own word for it that Hood made an agreeable living without excessive labor, and that if there were a friction which wore away his life, it was the result of ambition, temperament, and carelessness. His regular industry certainly did not blight exquisite results. His memorable poems—the 'Song of the Shirt,' the 'Bridge of Sighs'—were not injured by his work upon the 'Comic Annual'; and if he had had an income of ten thousand pounds a year, he would hardly have written a fresh 'Song of the Shirt' instead of a joke every time that he took up his pen."

Mr. Curtis agrees with Thackeray in thinking that if the literary classes were freed from the necessity of regular work, if they had boundless leisure and choice, the stock of the world's masterpieces would not thereby be increased: "Probably the

general result would be less literature, but not better." Indeed, he holds that it is to the necessity of the moment, or to the ever-recurring necessities of life, that we owe many of the greatest and most precious books.

G. W. CURTIS ON THE LITERARY VALUE OF PROFESSIONAL WORK.

Here is Shakespeare, [he continues] who writes "Lear" and "Hamlet" and "As You Like It" in the way of business, just as Mr. Greeley writes an article in the *Tribune*. Shakespeare has an interest in the play-house, and the public must be attracted that the owners may live. Is the play less a glorious poem because it is written to fill the house and bring in money, and not to fill the world with wonder and bring in fame? It is the professional duty of Bossuet regularly to preach sermons. Is his discourse less lofty, eloquent, inspiring, because he must preach every week? Addison is poor and must live, so twice a week he writes a *Spectator*. Is Sir Roger de Coverley a less charming figure because he is sketched to give bread to the artist? Are the musings in Westminster Abbey not wisely melancholy because they may have served to appease the printer's cry for copy?

How much of the best literature, too, is not only occasioned by the common necessities of life, as with Shakespeare, but is part of the special action of an age or country! Milton makes his great plea for unlicensed printing as an editor writes an article to-day. It is, in

fact, just that. It is a prodigious "leader." It is a political pamphlet to produce a certain result. Burke's "Reflections" and his "Letter to a Noble Lord," and all of his works, except the purely literary, which are of the least value in literature, are pamphlets and speeches addressed to public opinion, and meant to accomplish certain purposes. If the works of other and more modern men are less valuable literature, it is not because they were inspired by ephemeral occasions, but because they have not the signet of genius. The burlesque of "Humpty Dumpty" at the New York Olympic is produced for the same purpose that "Romeo and Juliet" was written. If it is not as wonderful, the reason is not that it was written to entertain the public.

Or take some of our own recent books. There is Lowell's collection, "My Study Windows." The wisdom and wit and insight and imagination of the book are as delightful as they are surprising. The most cynical critic will not despair of American literature if American authors are to write such books. But this also belongs to the category that we are considering. Mr. Lowell is a man who could no more help writing wisely and well than apple-trees could help blossoming in the spring. But he is a professor and an editor. Certain work is, therefore, expected of him; and whether it be lectures or critical essays, it is not, in the sense of the objector, purely voluntary; it is the coinage of the brain into dollars. Of course it is none the less worthy of his genius, and that is the very point. Or take Howells' "Suburban Sketches," a book of the most racy and refined humor and subtle

observation and artistic felicity—a crystal cup airily carved and filled with the most delicate and odorous wine. How delightful in the hurry and scramble of our paper and magazine writing, we say, to find the touch of the artist who considers and finishes, knowing, as the shrewd painter said, that the artist is nine-tenths mechanic! But here, again, it turns out that this book, like Lowell's, is magazine or review writing; and again we find that the secret of excellence is not in the regularity, nor the form, nor the mundane necessity of the work, but in the genius of the workman. The same is true of Mr. Bret Harte, of whom Mark Twain said to the Easy Chair that he was, first of all, artist. But his work was all done by contract —not to speak offensively; he was one of the magazine host, and he wrote as the reporter writes in the city newspaper, and as Shakespeare wrote for the theatre.

Do we, therefore, deny that there are literary hacks, and men and women of gifts and accomplishment who scribble their lives away for the insatiable hands of the printer's devil? No; we do not deny that there are a great many clever people—for we know very many—who write constantly for the press; but we do deny that their work is in any poor sense altogether scribbling. A great deal of it is ephemeral from the nature of the case; but that is not a discredit. A powerful speech, a persuasive article, which seizes and moulds public opinion to a great and beneficent result, is often ephemeral. But it is not therefore to be described as gabble and scribble. Indeed, the intellectual force, the imagination, the accomplishment which at another time and under other

circumstances might have written a book every five years, instead of a magazine article every month or a leader every day, are not lost; they are still as efficiently felt, although the individual fame which occasional concentration might have bestowed upon some is now possibly lost in the diffusion of incessant production.

And *cui bono?* Who or what would have been the gainer? The true end of a man's life is to do all that he can do well—not to cherish his own renown, or merely to gratify his own taste. If we must come to that kind of argument, let us ask whether Mr. Ticknor might not have done more wisely if, instead of secluding himself in his library and writing a history of Spanish literature, he had brought himself to bear directly upon American life and character? Certainly the Easy Chair would be the last to complain of that long and tranquil devotion to elegant scholarship. But is that the ideal of life for American literary men? Shall they be stoled priests ministering always at the high altar, with their gorgeous backs to the people, or apostles going into many lands and homes, bearing gifts of healing for the sorrows and the wants of to-day? They need not, indeed—and this we shall all cordially allow—they need not, and they must not, trail their sacred vestments in the mire. They must not sell themselves to say or do unclean things, nor forget that money may be bought at a price that makes all money valueless, nor give up to a party or a sect what was meant for mankind.

Mr. Curtis himself might very well be instanced

as a case in point. In my own private sliding scale of merit, at least, there are one or two of Mr. Curtis' books which are placed among the most delicately beautiful things in English literature. Nevertheless, his highest achievement has not been in this field. Far more honorable is the work that has been embodied in "ephemeral" speeches and editorials. He has been a great and widely-felt power in ennobling and purifying the political atmosphere of his country. No doubt he might have built up a more substantial reputation had he confined himself to the making of books. But does that constitute a legitimate basis for complaint? The man who would not willingly sacrifice a few literary "honors" for the sake of accomplishing the good which Mr. Curtis has done is worthy of very little respect, of very little honor. If the love of fame is to induce such selfishness as that, the sooner we come to look upon it as one of the baser impulses of our nature the better for all of us.

But we have been wandering too long upon the heights. Let us come down out to an every-day level. There is a class of persons, and their number is daily increasing, who, without claiming to be prophets or poets or philosophers, have talents and culture and what are called literary tastes. For these persons the trade of literature offers not only congenial channels of activity, but a chance of earning

a fair competence and a respectable position in the world. Mr. James Payn, who is himself a magazinist, an editor, a publisher's reader, and a novelist, goes further than this. In a paper which some years ago attracted a little attention, he lays down the principle that the literary calling is one for which any young fellow of parts may be fitted far more advantageously than for the older and more recognized professions. He believes that nature does not often indicate a boy's vocation in his earlier years. "Boys have rarely any special aptitude for any thing practical beyond punching each other's heads, or (and these are the clever ones) for keeping their own heads unpunched." A clever boy, he says, can be trained to almost any thing, and an ordinary boy will not do one thing better than another. For the sake of peace and quietness he will allow that with the geniuses nature is all-powerful, but with nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand of us, second nature, use, is the true mistress, and, paradoxical though it may sound, literature, he asserts, is the calling in which she has the greatest sway. Mr. Payn, therefore, thinks that a father with a clever son on his hands can hardly do better than bring him up to literature as a profession,—that is, train him with a distinct impression that he is to get his living by writing articles in newspapers, papers in magazines, and books that will sell, with

a chance, of course if it is in him to do that kind of work for the world, of producing books which deserve to live.

JAMES PAYN ON JOURNALISM AND ITS OPPORTUNITIES.

The idea of bringing young people up to literature [Mr. Payn acknowledges] is doubtless calculated to raise the eyebrows almost as much as the suggestion of bringing them up to the stage. The notions of paterfamilias in this respect are very much what they were fifty years ago. "What! put my boy in Grub Street? I would rather see him in his coffin." In his mind's eye he beholds Savage on his bunk and Chatterton on his death-bed. He does not know that there are many hundreds of persons of both sexes who have found out this vocation for themselves, and are diligently pursuing it—under circumstances of quite unnecessary difficulty—to their material advantage. He is unaware that the conditions of literature in England have been as completely changed within a single generation as those of locomotion.

There are, it is true, at present no great prizes in literature, such as are offered by the learned professions, but there are quite as many small ones—competencies; while on the other hand it is not so much of a lottery. It is not necessary to marry an attorney's daughter, or a bishop's, to get on in it. The calling, as it is termed (I know not why, for it is often heavy enough), of "light literature" is in such contempt, through ignorance on the one hand and arrogance on the other, that one is almost afraid, in such a connection, to speak of merit; yet merit,

or at all events aptitude with diligence, is certain of success in it. A great deal has been said about editors being blind to the worth of unknown authors; but, if so, they must be also blind (and this I have never heard said of them) to their own interests. It would be just as reasonable to accuse a recruiting sergeant of passing by the stout six-feet fellows who wish to enlist with him, and for each of whom—directly or indirectly—he receives head money. It is possible, of course, that one particular sergeant may be drunken, or careless of his own interests, but in that case the literary recruit has only to apply next door. The opportunities for action in the field of literature are now so very numerous, that it is impossible that any able volunteer should be long shut out of it; and I have observed that the complaints about want of employment come almost solely from those unfit for service. Nay, in the ranks of the literary army there are very many who should have been excluded. Few, if any, are there through favor; but the fact is, the work to be done is so extensive and so varied that there is not a sufficiency of good candidates to do it. And of what is called "skilled labor" among them there is scarcely any. The question "What can you do?" put by an editor to an aspirant, generally astonishes him very much. The aspirant is ready to do any thing, he says, which the other will please to suggest. "But what is your line in literature? What can you do best?—not tragedies in blank verse, I hope?"

Perhaps the aspirant here hangs his head; he *has* written tragedies. In which case there is good hope for him, because it shows a natural bent. But he generally replies

that he has written nothing as yet except that essay on the genius of Cicero (at which the editor has already shaken his head) and that defence of Mary Queen of Scots. Or perhaps he has written some translations of Horace, which he is surprised to find not a novelty ; or some considerations upon the value of a feudal system. At four-and-twenty, in short, he is but an overgrown school-boy. He has been taught, indeed, to acquire knowledge of a certain sort, but not the habit of acquiring ; he has been taught to observe nothing ; he is ignorant upon all the subjects that interest his fellow-creatures, and in his new ambition is like one who endeavors to attract an audience without having any thing to tell them. He knows some Latin, a little Greek, a very little French, and a very, very little of what are called the English classics. He has read a few recent novels, perhaps, but of modern English literature, and of that (to him, at least) most important branch of it, English journalism, he knows nothing. His views and opinions are those of a public school, which are by no means in accordance with those of the great world of readers ; or he is full of the class prejudices imbibed at college. In short, he may be as vigorous as a Zulu, with the materials of a first-rate soldier in him, but his arms are only a club and an assegai, and are of no service. Why should he not be fitted out in early life with literary weapons of precision, and taught the use of them ?

I say again that poor paterfamilias, looking hopelessly about him, like Quintus Curtius in the riddle, for "a nice opening for a young man," is totally ignorant of the

opportunities, if not for fame and fortune, at least for competency and comfort, that literature now offers to a clever lad. He looks round him; he sees the Church leading nowhere, with much greater certainty of expense than income, and demanding a huge sum for what is irreverently termed "gate money;" he sees the Bar, with its high-road leading indeed to the woolsack, but with a hundred byways leading nowhere in particular, and full of turnpikes—legal tutors, legal fees, rents of chambers, etc., which he has to defray; he sees Physic, at which mater-familias sniffs and turns her nose up. "Her Jack, with such agreeable manners, to become a saw-bones! Never!" He sees the Army, and thinks, since Jack has such great abilities, it seems a pity to give him a red coat, which costs also considerably more than a black one; and how is Jack to live upon his pay?

After all, indeed, however prettily one puts it, the question is with him, not so much "*What* is my Jack to be?" as "*How* is my Jack to live?" To one who has any gift of humor there are few things more amusing than to observe how this vulgar, but really rather important, inquiry is ignored by those who take the subject of modern education in hand. They are chiefly schoolmasters, who are not so deep in their books but that they can spare a glance or two in the direction of their banker's account; or fellows of colleges, who have no children, and therefore never feel the difficulty of supporting them. Heaven forbid that so humble an individual as myself should question their wisdom, or say any thing about them that should seem to smack of irreverence; but I do believe

that (with one or two exceptions I have in my mind) the system they have introduced among us is the greatest humbug in the universe. In the meantime poor paterfamilias (who is the last man, they flatter themselves, to find this out) stands with his hands (and very little else) in his pockets, regarding his clever offspring, and wondering what he shall do with him. He remembers to have read about a man on his death-bed who calls his children about him and thanks God, though he has left them nothing to live upon, he has given them a good education, and tries to extract comfort from the reminiscence. That he has spent money enough upon Jack's education is certain ; something between two and three thousand pounds in all at least, the interest of which, it strikes him, would be very convenient to keep him. But unfortunately the principal is gone and Jack isn't.

Now suppose—for one may suppose any thing, however ridiculous—he had spent two or three hundred pounds at the very most, and brought him up to the Calling of Literature. He believes, perhaps, that it is only geniuses that succeed in it (in which case I know more geniuses than I had any idea of), and he doesn't think Jack a genius, though Jack's mother does. Or, as is more probable, he regards it as a hand-to-mouth calling, which to-day gives its disciples a five-pound note, and to-morrow five pence. He calls to mind a saying about literature being a good stick, but not a good crutch—an excellent auxiliary, but no permanent support ; but he forgets the all-important fact that the remark was made half a century ago.

Poor blind paterfamilias—shall I couch you? If the operation is successful, I am sure you will thank me for it; but, on the other hand, I foresee I shall incur the greatest enmities. Should I encourage clever Jack, and, what is worse, a thousand Jacks who are not clever, to enter upon this vocation, what will editors say to me? I shall have to go about, perhaps, guarded with two policemen with revolvers, like an Irish gentleman on his landed estate. "Is not the flood of rubbish to which we are already subjected," I hear them crying, "bad enough, without your pulling up the sluices of universal stupidity?" My suggestion, however, is intended to benefit them by clearing away the rubbish and inducing a clearer and deeper stream for the turning of their mills. At the same time I confess that the lessening of paterfamilias's difficulties is my main object. What I would open his eyes to is the fact that a calling, the advantages of which he has no knowledge, *does* present itself to clever Jack, which will cost him nothing but pens, ink, and paper to enter upon, and in which, if he has been well trained for it, he will surely be successful, since so many succeed in it without any training at all. Why should not Jack have this in view from his cradle as much as the *ignes-fatui* of woolsacks and mitres? If it has no lord-chancellorships, it has plenty of county court appointments; if it has no bishoprics, it has plenty of benefices—and really, as times go, some pretty fat ones.

On your breakfast table, good paterfamilias, there lies, every morning, a newspaper, and on Saturday perhaps there are two or three. When you go out in the street

you are pestered to buy half a score more of them. In your club reading-room there are a hundred different journals. When you travel by the railway you see at every station a provincial newspaper of more or less extensive circulation. Has it never struck you that to supply these publications with their leading articles there must be an immense staff of persons called journalists, professing every description of opinion, and advocating every conceivable policy? And do you suppose these gentry only get £70 a year for their work, like a curate; or £60, like a sub-lieutenant; or that they have to pay three times those sums for the privilege of belonging to the press, as a barrister does for belonging to his inn? Again, in London at least, there are as many magazines as newspapers, containing every kind of literature, the very contributors of which are so numerous that they form a public of themselves. That seems at the first blush to militate against my suggestion; but though contributors are so common, and upon the whole so good—indeed, considering the conditions under which they labor, so wonderfully good,—they are not (I have heard editors say) so good as they might be, supposing (for example) they knew a little of science, history, politics, English literature, and especially of the art of composition, before they volunteered their services. At present the ranks of journalistic and periodical literature are largely recruited from the failures in other professions. The bright young barrister who can't get a brief takes to literature as a calling, just as the man who has "gone a cropper" in the army takes to the

wine-trade. And what æons of time and what millions of money have been wasted on them in the meanwhile!

The announcement written on the gates of all the recognized professions in England is the same that would-be travellers read on the faces of the passengers on the underground railway after office hours: "Our number is complete and our room is limited." In literature, on the contrary, though its vehicles may seem as tightly packed, substitution can be effected. There may be persons travelling on that line in the first class who ought to be in the third, and indeed have no reasonable pretext for being there at all. And if clever Jack could show his ticket, he would turn them out of it.

Again, so far from the space being limited, it is continually enlarging, and that out of all proportion to those who have tickets. We hear from its enemies that the Church is doomed, and from its friends that it is in danger; there is a small but energetic party who are bent on reducing the Army, and even on doing away with it; nay, so wicked and presumptuous has human nature grown, that mutterings are heard and menaces are uttered against the delay and exactions of the Law itself; whereas Literature has no foes, and is enlarging its boundaries in all directions. It is all "a-growing and a-blowing," as the peripatetic gardeners say of their plants; but, unlike their wares, it has its roots deep in the soil and is an evergreen. Its promise is golden, and its prospects are boundless for every class of writer.

I am well aware how mischievous, as well as troublesome, would be the encouragement of mediocrity ; and in stating these promising facts I have no such purpose in my mind. On the contrary, there is an immense amount of mediocrity already in literature, which I think my proposition of training up "clever Jack" to that calling would discourage. I have no expectation of establishing a manufactory for genius—and, indeed, for reasons it is not necessary to specify, I would not do it if I could. But whereas all kinds of "culture" have been recommended to the youth of Great Britain (and certainly with no limit as to the expense of acquisition), the cultivation of such natural faculties as imagination and humor (for example) has never been suggested. The possibility of such a thing will doubtless be denied. I am quite certain, however, that they are capable of great development, and that they may be brought to attain, if not perfection, at all events a high degree of excellence. The proof, to those who choose to look for it, is plain enough even as matters stand. Use and opportunity are already producing scores of examples of it ; if supplemented by early education they might surely produce still more.

There is so great and general a prejudice against special studies, that I must humbly conclude there is something in it. On the other hand, I know a large number of highly—that is, broadly—educated persons, who are desperately dull. "But would they have been less dull," it may be asked, "if they were also ignorant ?" Yes, I believe they would. They have swallowed too much for digestions naturally weak ; they have become inert,

conceited, oppressive to themselves and others—prigs. And I think that even clever young people suffer in a less degree from the same cause. Some one has written, "Information is always useful." This reminds me of the married lady, fond of bargains, who once bought a door-plate at a sale with "Mr. Wilkins" on it. Her own name was Jones, but the door-plate was very cheap, and her husband, she argued, *might* die, and then she might marry a man of the name of Wilkins. "Depend upon it, every thing comes in useful," she said, "if you only keep it long enough."

This is what I venture to doubt. I have myself purchased several door-plates (quite as burthensome, but not so cheap, as that good lady's), which have been of no sort of use to me, and are still on hand.

## CHAPTER VII.

### SOME LITERARY CONFESSIONS.

Struggles and trials of men of letters autobiographically related—Matthew Browne—Frederick B. Perkins—A New York journalist—A literary man-of-all-work—A disgusted magazinist—An editor's story.

AN example is always more satisfactory than a general principle. An honest record of the struggles and trials which a man may have endured on his road to success is more interesting and more instructive than a mere statement of the rules whose observance ought to lead to success. In this chapter I will bring together a number of autobiographical reminiscences by men who have succeeded in establishing for themselves a foothold in the periodical literature of the day, which may give others a hint as to how beginnings of this kind are made. Mr. Matthew Browne, as a pendant to the article already quoted in our second chapter, gives a peep behind the scenes of his own literary career. Mr. Browne tells us that he should never have thought of writing for money at all, had it not been that he was in a manner driven to it by finding

that the occupations in which he happened to be engaged were telling on his health. But once having conceived the idea, he set to work deliberately to study the conditions of the literary market.

### MATTHEW BROWNE'S EXPERIENCES.

Putting one thing with another [he continues], I began a determined course of preparatory study—that is to say, I minutely analyzed the sort of writing for which I found there was a market. In this way I pulled to pieces every novel and every leading article that I came across. Thus, I took so many pages of a story and chopped it all up into incident, conversation, and comment. Leading articles gave me great trouble. I found that I could write articles that were printed when the subject excited me, *or* when the appeal in the discussion was to first principles. Hence, an article of mine on a revolution, or on the law of husband and wife, would, I found, be welcomed; but for politics, in the ordinary sense of the word, I had not a whiff of instinct.

I never could get a firm footing, to begin with. It was Austria wants to do this, and Prussia wants to do the other; the Bourbons aimed at so-and-so, and Spain had her reasons for standing aloof. But I was, for one thing, unable to see that there was any ground for all this sort of thing, outside the fancy of the *rédacteur;* and then, again, I could never personify Austria, or Spain, or Prussia, or France. My mind, or, as Lord Westbury puts it, what I was pleased to call my mind, said, "Austria?

But what is Austria? It is so many roods of ground." It was intelligible to me that a man should want to marry a particular woman, or to secure a particular estate, for its beauty or use; but that Schwarzenberg and Thiers and Palmerston, and A. and B., and who-not, should be playing a political "game" with earnestness enough to deserve or justify a serious leading article, was to me utterly unintelligible. This was not for want of strong English feeling and even passionate pride in "speaking the tongue that Shakespeare spake," but from my general incapacity to understand why people should be always meddling with each other. When I was a little boy I remember hearing a shock-headed, wart-nosed tradesman, brandishing a ham-knife, holding forth thus:—"What does a man go and be a politician for? His own aggrandizement. What makes a man go and be a clergyman? His own aggrandizement. What makes me go and keep a 'am-and-beef shop? My own aggrandizement." Well, I had been brought up in some loneliness, and chiefly in the society of those who had a consuming desire to make certain opinions prevail; the opinions being rooted in first principles, and the only means dreamt of being fair persuasion. And up to this time of my life, late as it was, I had only a faint appreciation of the activity of the "aggrandizement" motive in the affairs of the world. Besides this obstacle to my appreciating current political, or even much of current social, criticism, there was another difficulty. Leading articles seemed to me to begin from nothing and lead to nowhere, and it was not till after most persevering study that I succeeded in cutting open the bellows

and finding where the wind came from. Then, again, I carefully examined the magazines, and very carefully indeed the Notices to Correspondents. But at thirty years of age I was still so green as to write one day to the *Times*, pointing out an error of fact and a clear fallacy of deduction in one of its leaders, doing this in the full, undoubting expectation that they would make the necessary correction. About this time I had an introduction to Mr. Mowbray Morris, and saw him in his room at the *Times* office. Nothing came of it, and I expect he thought I was a real Arcadian. I was.

My letters of introduction were rather numerous, and addressed to people who could probably have helped me, if they had taken pains ; nay, some of whom would probably have done so if I had "pushed" a little. But this was impossible to me ; and I was much surprised that clever men—as I had reason to suppose many of these persons to whom I had letters really were—did not seem able at a glance to feel sure that this real Arcadian had a share of honesty, application, and versatility which might make it politic, merely as a matter of business, to treat him civilly. The only person, however, who was really insolent, was a man who had written chiefly on "love" and "brotherhood." I am not writing down a cynical fib, but the simple truth. He certainly annoyed me, and I thought to myself, "One of these days I will serve you out." I have, of course, never served him out ; the only effect of his rudeness has been that I have been able to speak of him with cheerful frankness. There was some fun in situations of this kind ; and I used to enjoy the

feeling that while, perhaps, some one to whom I had a letter was snubbing me, or at least treating me *de haut en bas*, he was behaving thus to a stranger who would be able to his dying day to describe every look of the superior being's eyes, every line of his face, every word he said, the buttons on his coat, how high the gas was, and what tune the organ-grinder was playing in the next street, while the little scene came off.

After a time I was told by an old friend of a gentleman who, he thought, might help me. Him I hunted up, by a circuitous route, though I knew neither his name, his qualifications, nor his address. He is a man of genius and of good nature, and through him I got really useful introductions. From this time there were no *external* difficulties in my way. But conscientious scruples, and personal habits of my own, remained to constitute real and very serious obstacles. I was not what Mr. Carlyle, describing the literary amanuensis who helped him in his Cromwell labors, termed "hardy." The manner in which the ordinary journalist knocks about was always a wonder to me. I could neither stand gas, nor tobacco, nor pottering about, nor hunting people up in the intervals of literary labor, nor what those who know me have (too) often heard me call "jaw." I mean the kind of debate which goes on at discussion societies, and among even intelligent men when public topics arise after dinner. It is half sincere ; it is wanting in the nicety of distinction which love of truth demands ; it is full of push and loudness, personal vanity, and the zest of combat : so it seems to me that no one could have much of it

without loss, not only of self-respect, but also of fineness of perception and clearness of conscience. As unpleasant in another way was what we may perhaps call the clever "club" talk of literary men. Here you find men trying apparently which can say the smartest thing—to quote a *mot* of a living writer of admirable *vers de société*, "they call their jokes 'quips,' but the work is so hard that they might just as well be called 'cranks.'" On the whole, my tastes and habits were about as unfavorable for making way in journalism as could possibly be supposed. The necessity of keeping a conscience—and obstinately keeping it under a glass case too—was a far more serious matter.

It so happened, however, that immediately on starting with my pen in a professional way, I got a character for writing good critical papers. The very first critical essay I ever wrote was quoted, and noticed in high quarters; and it passed round that I had a quick scent in literary matters. But the way in which this worked was very amusing. Everybody went about to flood me with reviewing work. It was quite natural, but rather wide of the mark. When a man who possesses a pretty good critical scent takes up a book that is either by goodness or badness suggestive, there are "three courses" open to him. He may *characterize* it in a few sentences; but half a dozen lines, even if they are bright and exhaustive in their way, are not a review—are not, in fact, what is wanted of a journalist. Or he may make it a topic, and produce an article as long as a small book. This, again, however good, is not what is wanted of a journalist.

The third course, to write a column or two about a book that has no particular life in it, is the arduous one. And arduous indeed it is.

There was another difficulty which stood in my way as a journalist. There is a class of article for which there is always a demand. I mean the kind of article which teaches one-half of the world how the other half lives. I hope literary beginners who may read these lines will take note of that. For this kind of writing I have some qualifications—quickness of eye, a tenacious memory of detail, and a lively sense of fun; but then I could not knock about and come up to time. A day at Spitalfields would make me ill. There was a case in which, under unusually favorable conditions, I had to refuse a task of this kind. The kind and discerning friend who proposed it I met by exposing my own unfitness in the matter of knocking about, and I said, "Mr. So-and-so is your man; he will do it better than I shall in many respects." My friend answered, "No, not in every respect; he will not put into it the feeling that you will." In spite of this encouragement, I declined the work, and for the soundest reasons. But any beginner who can do writing of this description, with plenty of detail,—and without interspaces of meditation, such as would come down by main force upon my pen,—may make sure of earning money by literature.

The practical upshot of most of the foregoing memoranda is this:—It so happened that I usually got into print when I desired it; that my very first article "professionally" written was printed in good company; and that I

had few difficulties outside of my own personal peculiarities. But how was this? Just thus (shade of Artemus Ward!): I had for years made the working literature of the day a study; knew the things that tended to exclude a man's writing from magazines and newspapers, and the special points that I had to guard against. Is there any thing wrong in suggesting that not one in a thousand of the class called "literary aspirants" has ever made the working literature of the hour a systematic study?

The articles, like the books, of the class called literary aspirants are usually rejected, even when they have merit, upon what may be termed points of literary form. This paragraph is good, and *that* is good, and this other is really fine; but the whole thing wants licking into shape. Thus, an editor or reviewer of experience and vision can almost certainly tell amateur work at a glance. We are sometimes told—and thousands of "aspirants" think with bitterness—that the distinction between the amateur and the practised writer is idle, because everybody is an amateur to begin with. But I have shown that this is not true. In spite of long practice in the use of the pen, I made working literature a deliberate study, and others have done the same: that is, they have not relied on mere aptitude. "Look," says the writer of a formless novel, "look at 'Jane Eyre!'" Well, by all means look at "Jane Eyre,"—you can hardly look at a more instructive case. Currer Bell did not succeed as an amateur; she had been a hard student of the conditions of success, and she attended to them so far as her knowledge went, and so far as she desired to use them. Of lit-

erary ambition proper she had none, nor—if I may speak of myself in the same sentence—have I. But whatever one's motive, or impulse, may be in writing, he must pay some attention to matters of literary form, and he must comply with such of them as have a just and natural foundation. He is, in fact, as much bound to comply with these as he is bound *not* to comply with those which demand some sacrifice of truthfulness, self-respect, and clearness of conscience.

Paradoxical as some may think it, the chief hindrance to honest literary success is literary vainglory to begin with. This involves splash, false fire, chaotic "outlay" (to use a surveyor's phrase) of the work, and foolish and exaggerated ideas of the "success" within reach. There was a one-volume novel, published a year or two ago, in which a young journalist, whose suit had been rejected by a young lady's "'aughty" mother, and who is under a cloud for a time, makes money at a rate which must have set every journalist in England laughing, and then suddenly blazes out in the society of dukes and Cabinet ministers because he has written a crushing exposure in a daily paper of the probable working of "clause 5" of a certain bill. This particular book was a very innocent one, and no more vainglorious than Currer Bell's notions of the Duke of Wellington. In that specimen sheet of her handwriting given by Mrs. Gaskell in the memoir, she shows us the Duke at the War Office, putting on his hat at five minutes to four, telling the clerks that they might go, and scattering "largess" among them with a liberal hand as he takes his leave for the day.

*Sancta simplicitas!* we cry; and there is an end. But every writing man knows that "aspirants," as a class, are eaten up with vainglory. They want distinction and the run of pleasures of a "literary" life as they apprehend them. They have visions of the tenth thousand, and flaming reviews, and gorgeous society. I see with infinite amusement the ideas some people have of the sort of life I lead. They think—they almost tell me so in words—that I have always got my pocket full of orders for the theatre, that I can button-hole anybody I please, that I go to the Queen's garden-parties, that I sit, with a halo round my head, in gilded saloons, saying, or hearing said, brilliant *mots*, that I drink champagne with actresses behind the scenes, and that, if they offend me, I shall at once put them in *Punch* or the *Times*. I have also been told—almost point-blank in some cases—that it was only my jealousy and desire to "keep others down" that prevented my procuring immediate admission into periodicals for articles submitted to me by A. or B., which were perhaps of the silliest and most despicable quality. I have had this said or hinted to my face, or behind my back, about articles that were utterly unprintable, at times when my own papers had been waiting months—three, six, or eight months—for insertion in places where I had what is called "interest." People who have—who are *capable* of having—notions of this kind, I would certainly do my best to keep out of literature; not, however, from "jealousy," but because they are morally unfit for it.

In "A Chat by Way of Preface" in his Devil

Puzzlers, Mr. Frederick B. Perkins gives the following history of his own experience as a free lance in the field of literature, and especially of magazine literature:

F. B. PERKINS' EXPERIENCE.

Good short stories are always welcomed by magazines; and moreover the judgment of the editor is usually pretty correct. So far as the forty or fifty stories and sketches which I have written are concerned, it appears to me that almost always the best ones were most readily accepted, and that the poorer specimens waited the longest and knocked at most doors. Perhaps some juniors to myself in this line of literature may like to know how I used to manage. I had a regular scale of periodicals. This was a good while ago, my young friends, and sundry names now prominent did not then exist. What seemed best I used to offer to Putnam or Harper. What they would not use I sometimes offered to *Peterson's Magazine*, sometimes to the Philadelphia *Saturday Evening Post*, and so on; and what I could not otherwise use I could always sell to the New York *Sunday Dispatch* for five dollars. I still have the record, which I kept in those days, of a great number of stories and other writings, and of their successive offerings and final fate. I believe there are but one or two "sketches" and no "stories" at all which were never published. * * * But I never used to be enraged at a "declined with thanks," even on a printed blank: I only said, There 's so much money that I have n't got; and I immediately effaced the editor's record num-

ber, re-writing the first page, if necessary, for this purpose (the memento of rejection does certainly not help the MS. with the next editor), and sent it to editor No. 2. One thing I used to be particular about, namely, to be paid for my work. I have often been tempted to subscribe to Dr. Johnson's dictum (is it not his ?) that nothing is entitled to be called literature which is not written for money. But this is only one side of the truth. I wrote for money because I had to ; only my habit was to try to write as an artist, to the best of my ability, and to produce the best work I could, just as if there was no money in the world ; and then to try and sell it as if there was nothing else. Truly, the result was not much, but my experiments have firmly convinced me that in proportion as one can do good work it will be bought and paid for.

The *Atlantic Monthly* has lately in its Contributors' Club published a number of these literary confessions, which seem to have been read with much interest. From this source I extract the following record of a manly, energetic struggle into success :

LITERARY CONFESSIONS OF A NEW YORK JOURNALIST.

I arrived in New York from the —— just eight years ago. I was forty-two, and without any literary experience. When I was twenty-five I had in a *dilettante* way written some two or three stories, which had appeared in the ——. In 1870, with a family of four, without a penny in my pocket, utterly unknown in New York, I had to work

with my pen or starve. My very first article was accepted by the leading magazine in the country. I felt no elation, for I was wise enough to attribute this more to luck than merit. I became a subaltern upon the staff of a leading New York daily. I accepted the worst and most badly paid drudgery. I snapped, jackal-like, at any thing and every thing that was thrown me. Some of the business of the paper required my walking through the streets, winter and summer, for ten hours every day, and writing six hours more. I shivered under thin clothing in winter, having no overcoat. This work I kept up incessantly for eleven months. With all this labor, my board-bill was frequently in arrears. I often had no stockings, and my shoes were badly broken. Overwork, scanty food, and exposure brought on a terrible illness, a complication of diseases. I had brain-fever, jaundice, and came within an ace of losing my leg. I hobbled on crutches. I went to work when convalescent, and had a relapse. My doctor advised no brain work, but that would have turned my wife and children into the street. When in mental agony, when children were ill (I had a babe born just then), when there was no money to buy medicine, why my wife took my place beside the poor little sufferers' beds. I had to write as a relief for my mind; otherwise I might have gone mad. The history of my first successful story is worth recording: I had just lost a child, and to forget my sorrows I wrote. I was so poor that I could not buy paper. One of my boys had copy-books supplied by the common schools, one side of the leaf only having been written on. I used the blank

pages. When my story was completed I could barely spare the ten cents necessary for the purchase of fair paper on which to copy it. I sent my story to ——. I received very promptly a letter from the editor requesting me to call upon him. The story might suit, only it was too long for him. Would I curtail it? It might be then considered, the editor said. I took the story home, rewrote it, offered it, and it was declined. I was not a bit dismayed. I felt that my story was better than it had been. I took it in person to ——. I remember an amusing talk with the editor, when I presented my story. I dare say I was very untidy. Was my story good—really good? the editor of —— asked, as he examined a broken shoe and the fringed bottoms of my trousers. That editor seemed skeptical as to whether such a shabby-looking man could write any thing *good*. The story was returned, I am inclined to think, unread. I honestly confess that I have a little dodge of my own, which always informs me whether any copy I may have sent in has been read. My only revenge on this editor now is, that though he prints a good deal I never read him. I sent my story to ——, and it was accepted. I felt a little triumph now, as I had reached a higher literary medium than had the other magazines taken it. But it was two years before the story was published, and then without my name. More work was given me on my newspaper. I believe I originated a new kind of article, which was in demand. Still, my work only half supported me. I started a trade journal without capital. I was editor, publisher, advertising agent, clerk, office-boy, and all. It

was a fair venture, for after I had carried it alone for a year there was no loss. But my time was too precious, and I had to give it up. I could not wait for results. With a hundred dollars at my disposal, it would have become a valuable property. Somebody else followed out my idea, and to-day makes a handsome living out of it. For three years I was looking out for a steady place, and at last I found one; a weekly, just starting, wanted a drudge. The salary I asked for my services was so modest that I was taken on trial. I rapidly mastered all the details, and soon became assistant editor. I studied hard to acquire a certain branch of natural history which was requisite for the paper, and I succeeded. As almost every person on the paper was constantly intoxicated, I sometimes wrote that weekly up from beginning to end. I lost my position on the daily paper, though I contributed to it as an outsider whenever the chance permitted. In any interval of time I wrote magazine stories. I always offered them first to the leading magazine in New York, where they were invariably declined, to be accepted by some other magazine. I occasionally made five dollars by writing puffs. I differed with the tipsy editor of the weekly, and left it, after a year of very severe work. I regained my position on the daily. Shortly after this there was a change in the weekly I had helped to start, and I was recalled. I wanted two strings to my bow, and now I had them. To-day I have all the work I can get through. I rise at five, and devote fifteen hours to my literary labors. Every month I have to read all the American and English magazines, the lights and the

heavies. Besides this, I read professionally some fifteen English books, with some half-dozen French ones, during the month. Occasionally I read MSS. for publishers. I earn some $2700 a year. The time I spend in the cars, going and coming from my office, must be devoted to reading. I am very tired and jaded at night, but as I sleep soundly I rise fairly fresh next morning. If I had more time I would write more stories ; perhaps attempt a novel. Of course I have written my play, which I have not offered. With regard to magazines, what I send them now is always accepted. I am fortunate in not having an unsold MS. in my drawer. I am fifty, am temperate in one sense, not taking a glass of wine once a month, but am an intemperate smoker. I have not had a real holiday for four years. For five years I have not read six books for my own pleasure. I have no Sabbaths. If I did not work on Sunday I should have to sit up one whole night during the week to make up for lost time. I long for a day of rest. A great deal of work, I am afraid, has taken away my zest for play. If I have not a book in my hand I am unhappy. I have, thank God, made for myself and family a modest position. The only regret I feel is that I did not begin a literary career sooner ; then I might have been something. I am satisfied that story- or novel-writing alone leads to starvation, unless you are illustrious. A literary man must have the fixed weekly wage which comes from drudgery. This is the *nécessaire*, story-writing is the *superflue*. The first gives the bread, the last the caviare. It is very fine to chisel statues and chase caskets, but to

cut flagging or stamp out tenpenny nails is a much surer trade. In my experience I have found the judgment of magazine editors to be invariably correct. If my contributions have been declined by one magazine and accepted by another, I have always fancied that there were good reasons.

An anonymous writer in *Belgravia*, whom there is little difficulty, however, in identifying as Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, gives the following as his experience in literature.

### A LITERARY MAN-OF-ALL-WORK.

For more than twenty years I have been an industrious *littérateur*—I may add, of-all-work—laboring in all the departments. At the same time, this work has not been what is called "hard," such as that of a barrister in good practice, but of a rapid concentrated kind. The result is that I have succeeded in earning by my brains a sum that I fancy may surprise my readers, though I delay naming it until I have communicated my little experiences. These, I hope, will be a useful contribution to the question as to whether writing is a profitable profession. Perhaps I had better say at once, by way of piquing and inflaming my readers with a noble competition, that these profits are not far from fifteen thousand pounds—a very respectable sum. For the greater portion of the time I have kept a sort of Fee-Book, so that it is no speculative appraisement. During half the period alluded to I followed the profession of the Bar; and it may be said

that this word "following" is well chosen, for it entailed daily attendance for a number of hours: and if the profession did not follow me as well as I followed it, it brought in certain returns, and engrossed a large share of my attention. Yet I contrived gaily and with a light heart to woo and win the more engaging sister, who eventually rewarded me in the way described. Fifteen thousand pounds is fair return for the off-hand, rattling, and somewhat careless attention bestowed.

Yet I am not in the first rank—nor in the second—I might modestly put myself in the third; though some might reasonably dispute me even this unpresuming place. What have I done? what is my "literary baggage?" is naturally the next question. An ingenious Dryasdust took the trouble not long since to ascertain the real author, or find who was the recipient, of some letters of a well-known personage. This he discovered by following out certain allusions in the text, hunting through newspapers of the day—arriving by an almost exhaustive process at its solution. It was a surprise to one who fancied he was wrapped up close in his anonymous ulster, defiant of recognition. I run, therefore, the same risk of detection if I confess that this same "baggage" consists of great biographical chests—"heavy, perhaps massive"; light serial portmanteaux, or novels and tales, three-, two-, and one-volume; hat-boxes, bags, Gladstone "collapsing," and some collapsed, in the form of volumes of essays, short stories, disquisitions, criticisms, etc. I have written plays that have succeeded and plays that have failed, and have been paid sufficiently in both

categories. I have been a dramatic critic. I have attended a music-hall opening, and an exhibition of fans, as "our own reporter." I have contributed to an advertising paper which was left gratuitously at all doors,—and which dealt with its contributors on the same principle. I have gone specially to the Continent for one of the leading journals, a daily paper, and I have written for almost every magazine that has been born, died, or exists. I have written on painting, music, buildings, decorative art, dress, the classics, history, travels, my own life, the lives of other people, dancing, etc. In short, like Swift and his broomstick, I could write decently and respectably on any subject "briefed" to me.

It will be said, however, that this confession is, as it were, *hors concours*, and of no value as a contribution to the question, as a person with these Crichton-like gifts and this general versatility gains money as a matter of course. Not at all. It is the gaining of money that has brought me or stimulated these gifts, rather than the gifts that have brought the money. This may seem paradoxical, but if I might liken myself to so great and successful a personage, it is exactly akin to the progress of the great Mr. William Whiteley, who added to his departments, now a grocery, now a butchery, now coals, etc., according as the demand on him came. My wares I would not, of course, pretend to be of the same quality as his, be they excellent or the reverse ; but the analogy holds. I did all these things and do them still, though we all now feel, like other *entrepreneurs*, the pressure of the times.

The stock-in-trade for all this is, of course, first a gen-

eral taste for literature, and a familiarity with all the blind alleys, "wynds," crannies, and passages, which are invaluable in furnishing subjects for essays. This is all amusing reading to the person with the proper taste, and you can go on for ever emptying the stuff out of the old clumsy demijohn into nice modern flasks. There are innumerable forgotten personages and episodes which can be treated, and become new and interesting in the treatment. This is all acquired. So, too, is style—that ready, lively, and superficial style,—though it takes a long time. But I had better begin at the beginning, and tell "from the egg" how I became a writer.

This style, then, with a certain dramatic way of putting things so as to present a picture without the formal lines of a picture, and one which shall interest, I unconsciously secured very early and with little trouble. On leaving a great school for which I had an extraordinary affection, and where I had spent some happy and even romantic days, I fell into the habit of trying to reproduce them in writing, recalling the pleasant scenes in as vivid a way as I could. As this was often done, and earnestly done, and with all sincerity, the same scenes being described and redescribed as often as the humor seized me, there came to be a certain rude power and vividness in description which I recognize now when turning over the innumerable volumes with their crowded pages and minute writings. (What eyes one had then!) Even now the figures move, the lights glitter, the pleasant fragrance of the past exhales. Any one who saw this huge mass of MS., and the mass of description, characters, dialogues, and inci-

dents therein contained, would admit that here was an advantage in the way of training of no inconsiderable kind. Presently, of course, came the early contribution to the local paper, and the delight of seeing it in the local paper's type ; the only form of recognition, too, known to the local paper. All writers agree in the special and unique sweetness of this apparition ; and, indeed, I have heard writers of great mark, hackneyed at their work, confess that to the last the arrival of a proof-sheet and the sight of one's own thoughts in virgin array of type never cloyed, and produced a peculiar emotion of pleasure. I confess I always feel this charm ; I love the peculiar smell—some would use a worse word—of a printing-office. So far, there was no advance. All the world has written in private records and in local papers, to say nothing of the privately (and expensively) printed volume of poems. But in my case, as indeed in most other cases, it is the first difficult step that costs, and that makes or mars. Just as in mastering skating evolutions ; until you have fearlessly thrown yourself on the outside edge, nothing can be done or ever will be done. I recollect sending to the amiable and worthy Leitch Ritchie, for *Chambers's Journal*, the first serious contribution —a little story which accidentally had merits for success ; it was legible, short, and dramatic. I have no doubt, too, some accident determined its reception, akin to the turn of a card ; it might have been tossed aside or returned with thanks. A grave letter of approval was returned, and two pounds ten.

I fear that often nowadays the advantage of having his

contributions read for approval is lost to the beginner, as the packets sent in are so overwhelming in their number. Two or three other papers were accepted—I could have poured them in or out as by machinery ; but then began checks—not for cash, but "unsuitable," "no space," "so much in type,"—which conveyed the first lesson in writing profitably, that you must not merely not put all your eggs in one basket, but must have about as many baskets as eggs. What will not suit one will suit another ; what there is not room for in one there will be room for in another ; as a man with many daughters offers his fairest to a man of means and position, and gives his ugliest with money to a man of good will though obscure. So I now cast about for new channels, and tried and tried till I was heartsick and angry, meeting for my investment in paper and postage-stamps, certainly large returns. I very soon saw that this system would not do, and that one might go on posting contributions for the term of one's natural life without result, save the restoration of the composition—about as disagreeable as the news of its loss. A total reversal of this policy, and a brilliant *coup* in quite a new direction, was rewarded with success, and set me on the road to fortune. There was at this time a well-known *littérateur*, a critic and writer of authority and Johnsonian prestige, who was engaged upon a most important work, the very materials for which had cost him, I believe, very large sums of money. I was at the time much interested in him and his subject ; and as I lived in the city where his hero had flourished, I set to work to collect matter that would be

useful to him. In particular, I nearly blinded myself in deciphering some "marginalia," as they are called, in some huge folios preserved in an old library, made neat water-color sketches of localities, collected traditions, and, in short, made myself exceedingly useful, and earned his grateful acknowledgment. That was the beginning of a long friendship. At that time the no less amiable than gifted Dickens was flourishing in the height of his popularity, and directed his *Household Words* with great success. To be a writer in that journal, and associated with so great a master, was in itself an enormous advantage, which writers in other periodicals were devoid of. I ventured to presume on the grateful feelings of my new friend in this useful direction. Previously I had, indeed, essayed an entrance to the Wellington Street Paradise, but had been firmly but courteously repulsed by that Peri at the gate, the late Mr. W. H. Wills, who returned rejected contributions with a lithographed circular in which the contributors were assured that their efforts had been read and weighed, as was the custom of the office. This may have been a good-natured exaggeration for reading an extract or glancing at the whole ; but the daily post brought pounds of such matters which no staff could have grappled with. It was long, however, a tradition of the place, how my patron strode in one morning, and, laying down the document, required that it should "be *seen to at once*, set up in type, and dealt with." He was a man not to be trifled with. Within a fortnight it appeared. It was a not undramatic tale, in the vein of Mr. Wilkie Collins, then in high fashion. I had been

again lucky in the subject and treatment; it was short and telling. I was asked at once to supply something of the kind for the Christmas Number. On that hint I set to work, and from that moment to the present have never ceased to work for that pleasant journal, my connection with which, under the *régime* of father and son, has always been agreeable and satisfactory. The word "satisfactory" recalls me to the point of this paper, for it represents many thousand pounds, as the ledgers of *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* can tell.

Once established at *Household Words*, I found that the mere connection with that journal was a passport to other magazines. For the first year my returns were, I think, some fourteen to fifteen pounds. The next year they rose to sixty or seventy; the next, the amount grew into hundreds. As to the paper itself, I saw that what was required was originality of subject, something fresh and taking. I gave great thought to the selection of what would be desirable. This is really in itself an art, and one of the highest importance; for if it be found that you are sending in what is unsuitable, your credit sinks, and your—at last—really suitable article may share the fate of others. Where, too, the contributor is to be depended on, his paper often goes unread to the printers to be "set up." Nothing used to be pleasanter than the visit to the office to "settle subjects" with the editor.

But to show how pleasantly profit and pleasure may be combined in this most agreeable of all professions, I will note one "department" which I have exploited systematically to my own great enjoyment, and I hope to the satis-

faction of others concerned. I have travelled a great deal, *but never at my own cost: rather to exceeding profit.* I will give some special instances. I spent a week in Holland, and wrote twelve papers on the country for a journal, for which I received forty pounds—the net profit being thirty. I went specially to Rome at an interesting period, wrote observations on men and manners in a series of twenty papers, for which I received sixty pounds. They were published in a volume, for which I received seventy—leaving a net profit, after expenses, of eighty pounds. I have never made an expedition to France, Belgium, Ireland, anywhere, without turning it into cash. Nay, I have never been anywhere, or seen any thing important, without making it take this agreeable shape of profit. During the French war, when the Germans were advancing on Paris, I was eager to put this favorable principle in action. But special writers and correspondents were abundant, and every one was well supplied; so the chance of seeing any thing as a commissioned writer was desperate. However, a friendly editor in conversation was excited by the prospect of a vivid sketch of the unhappy city on the eve of a siege, and offered to "stand" all railway expenses to the scene of action, as well as the usual charge for an article. I look back to that hurried and dramatic expedition with infinite pleasure. There is something flattering to the *amour-propre* in being thus despatched at the cost of others. Another hurried expedition of the kind not only forms a delightful recollection, but illustrates what I said of the necessity of a certain judgment and nice sense of what is the "psychological

moment" for success in writing. If any ordinary writer of position were to offer himself as special correspondent to any of the greater daily journals, his services would, to a certainty, be declined, on the ground that their own staff was sufficient. Yet on one occasion I was lucky enough to enter the charmed circle, simply owing to a happy combination and prompt seizure of the "psychological moment." It was a few days after Christmas-day, in the year of the suppression of the gaming-houses in Germany. It occurred to me that it would be interesting to record the dying struggle of these institutions. I wondered, would there be any chronicle thereof in the great papers? I resolved to address two leading ones with the suggestion of the subject. One took no notice; from the other came a hurried despatch acceding to the idea, and fixing an almost midnight interview. The thought even now gives me pleasure. There was no time to be lost. I started, travelling all night, telegraphed from the scene a regular "correspondent" despatch, hurried back, got to town that night, and sat down to write a couple of "cols.," which appeared next morning—the whole accomplished within sixty to seventy hours. I received a most handsome *honoraire* for what was only a pleasure-trip.

But now came the idea of a larger and more profitable extension—the novel—which the success of Miss Braddon may be said to have opened up for the inferior and average writer. Fifteen or twenty years ago, the various topics of character and incident—the wicked woman of "sensation," the hulking muscular man of unbridled pas-

sions, and the female with steel eyes, cold heart, and yellow hair—were novelties, and people loved to hear as much as possible about them, and from any description of writer. These are now all hackneyed and "used up." The delineation of characters of the "Jane Eyre" model was in fashion. Good prices were paid, and it was actually stated that, through the system of the libraries, and owing to the voracious greed of readers, any story in three volumes, by any writer, was certain to "do,"—to return even some meagre remuneration to its writer. Thus inspired, I determined to set my skiff afloat on the already crowded stream. A friend who was directing a magazine that enjoyed a gasping asthmatic sort of existence, furnished an opening, and allowed me to "run" this first immature effort through his pages. The remuneration was fixed at, I think, five-and-twenty or thirty pounds. The production was issued in two volumes by a firm which, awkwardly enough, was at the moment in the agonies of death, and the child perished with the mother that brought it forth. But the late Mr. Bentley, to whom it was sent as a specimen of the author's powers, here interposed with an act which seems to belong to the romance of publishing, and, with an intrepidity now unfamiliar to the Row, said, "Write me a novel in three volumes as good, and I will give you one hundred and fifty pounds." Trumpet-tongued words indeed, which, I fear, neither Smith nor Jones nor clergyman's daughter are ever likely to hear again. I complied with a jocund alacrity. First, the work went through my friendly editor's journal, by which some thirty pounds adhered to it ;

then it came forth from Burlington Street with a fictitious name attached to it. It was a success, and passed through two editions. With these credentials I applied to my editor of Wellington Street; he, having read my successful venture, gave me an order for a story, at what seemed the munificent remuneration of FIVE HUNDRED POUNDS!—this, too, without having seen a line of the story, and with the further handsome treatment of accepting merely a few chapters in hand as a sufficient instalment with which to start. But, indeed, to the records of the generosity and confidence of the "chief," as we would call him, there was no end. Nothing, too, was more delightful than his hearty relish and appreciation of any thing to be approved—though the chief merit of most of these productions was that they were ingeniously successful imitations of his own manner. All that labored—if it can be called labor—under such auspices, "G. A. S.," Yates, Moy Thomas, Halliday (defunct now), Dutton Cook, Hollingshead, and myself (most industrious of all, and perhaps making his bow oftenest), can or could tell the same story. For this journal I have written no fewer than seven novels, which collectively have brought me in close upon two thousand pounds; and I have altogether written some fifteen stories, each contrived "a double debt to pay," and each of which has first passed through the periodical press, before appearance in its orthodox coat of three or two volumes. The total receipts from this source have been about three thousand pounds. Many of the stories have gone through two editions, one through four, and several enjoy a steady annual sale—

their titles being familiar enough at the railway bookstalls.

This, however, would have been but a poor result spread over so many years. So the next golden or profitable rule of the system soon suggested itself, viz., while you kept the literary fire all ablast and crackling, to have a number of irons heating in it. And I not only had a number of irons—I once drove three novels abreast—but a number of fires. Whether, as the wit said, your writings should go where your irons are, is another important question, and might dispense with discussion of the matter at all. But this "versatility" not only furnishes relief, but, as a source of profit, is invaluable. I accordingly very soon had broken new ground with my literary "pick," and started writing the lives of important personages, neglected unaccountably till I took them in hand. I am ashamed when I think of the free-and-easy mode in which I selected these great men for resurrection purposes; but I am bound to own that there was some art and nice judgment in the choice. One—the most successful of the series—was suggested by the publisher, taken in hand that night, and completed—"polished off," the irreverent would say—in three months. It was disposed of—they were always respectable, portly, square-looking things, two vols. octavo—to the tune of eight hundred copies at thirty shillings. In this department I wrote much; for four of such monuments I received seven hundred pounds; most of them, however, having also paid the double debt before alluded to. Again, another stroke of the pick, and I became

"an editor" of works,—a laborious and unprofitable duty. I "edited" two masters of English literature, but great favorites of mine, for twenty pounds apiece. They filled nine large volumes.

The "double debt to pay" principle is an admirable one, but requires art to carry out. A great difficulty, as it might seem at first sight, would be the disposal in this wise of the innumerable short tales which the diligent writer turns out, much as the diligent painter does his pot-boilers. These I used to collect in the old palmy days in volumes. But publishers will have nothing to do with such miscellanies now. Still I was not daunted, and, after issuing a volume, I ventured on the familiar device of collecting a number of persons on a journey, and making them tell stories. Even now, I am not *au bout*, and have another and more original device on my banner, namely, writing each short story in such a way that it shall be complete, and yet form part of a whole—like the shield platform formed by Rienzi's soldiers in the late representation of the opera. Each is carefully written in the same character, and forms an episode in his experience. Thus the casual reader is gratified, while I am equally so.

These various productions fill from sixty to seventy volumes of the official form; while the scattered papers, if brought together, would raise the tale to nearly one hundred. The material with which the literary baggage is packed is gathered from the sources I before mentioned, namely, "curious" reading in all directions; but the chief supply is drawn from myself. It is not too much

to say that every incident of my life, such as it is—feelings, thoughts, loves, sights, characters,—has been pressed in to do duty, more or less colored and treated, but giving a genuineness and vitality which always quickened the pace of the pen. I wrote an account of my old favorite school-days for Mr. Dickens, with which he was much pleased; these figured duly in several numbers of his journal at a return of some twenty pounds, and, with some additions, reappeared as a little volume which enjoyed much popularity, and ran through three editions in a few months. For this, however, I only received twenty pounds more; but then we did not anticipate this success. I may be pardoned for adding that the journal "written for gentlemen" declared that it was superior to the popular "Tom Brown." Still, the outlay in time and composition was far below the sum received, as it amounted to little more than that employed in writing letters to friends or one's journal.

As to publishers, here is the result of my experience: From the nobility of the Row—with one exception—came invariably the most hungry, meagre, and shabby offers. The two most eminent, perhaps, have invariably preferred that arrangement of "sharing," or "half-profits," which consists in tendering the author the shells, while the firm in question swallows the oyster. "Fraudulent" might seem a harsh word for such arrangements, but any thing analogous, if presented to a court of law, would probably be so stigmatized. I have had two transactions of the "sharing" kind, and these in early salad days; the first was with an eminent firm who had

taken two of my works; one a novel for which they had given a large price, the other a big biographical work on "sharing" terms. The latter seemed to be going off briskly, and a member of the firm informed me once, rubbing his hands pleasantly, that "there was money for me at the office." Not wishing to display a mean greed, I did not, as I ought to have done, repair at once to the office for the money, but let the matter stand over. Meanwhile, the firm discovered later that the novel had not been going so briskly. They took fright, and when the account of the biography came in, the "money at the office" had disappeared, and, strange to say, there was a loss. By an arrangement, however, connected with the copies on hand, I succeeded in extracting forty pounds. Authors should never forget the testimony given in court as to the liberality of an eminent firm whom I have heard styled "the Mæcenas of authors," who presented an unfortunate mad clergyman with a five-pound note for his substantial biography of a bishop. I have heard of an eminent firm disposing of 1200 copies of a bulky work and bringing in the author their debtor by five or ten pounds. The other personal transaction of the kind was with the worthy publisher of Catherine Street, an old friend and encourager, who honestly and faithfully divided the profits, and on a not very successful work handed me some eighty pounds as my share. I may add that with this excellent man—and we have had innumerable transactions—I have never had a scrap of writing in the shape of an agreement. His word and my word were sufficient. At the same time, it must be borne in mind

that a publisher is entitled to charge you all things as they would be charged to a non-publisher. Owing to his position and responsibilities, he obtains, with his printing, paper, and advertisements, discounts and other advantages.

All through this life nothing disagreeable has occurred to me and no unhandsome treatment has been encountered, save in perhaps two or three instances. I have always met with the most scrupulous honesty in settlements; and only in the case of one or two obscure journals have I been "done." I have met with but one instance of ungenerous behavior from "brethren of the craft," and this was not long ago.

As a curious bizarre instance of pleasant profit indirectly arising from this "periodical" writing, and of somewhat skilful exploitation, I must record the following: For one of the great weekly illustrated papers, enjoying a circulation of, I believe, 300,000 copies, and going over all the world (what an advertisement for a writer's name!), I had contributed a short Christmas story. This, as usual, was a transcript of personal feeling, written under the shadow of painful events. It turned on some brilliant, dazzling ball at which a man, after some great sorrow, was looking on, listening to one of those rapturous and dramatic waltzes, alternations of sadness and wild hilarity, which Waldteufel and other composers of his school have the art of writing. In these strains he seems to catch hints and snatches of his own life. It becomes like a wild dream. In the process, the waltz itself is described dramatically with all its fitful turns; in short, it

was a little feat of word-painting. The story itself was entitled "The Last Valse." After an interval, letters began to reach the editor asking—where was this most significant waltz, to which a gentleman had been listening, to be obtained? Another letter followed from an eminent publisher, saying that, if such were in existence, he would be happy to bring it out; what terms would be asked? Being of a musical turn, and having dabbled a good deal in amateur "composition," as such is by courtesy styled, I set to work, and, with some professional aid, and a taking air which a member of my own family furnished, a set of waltzes was constructed. The result was what I may proudly call the "well-known and familiar 'Geliebt und Verloren,' 'Loved and Lost,'" waltzes, played everywhere, on bands military, orchestral, and "German," by organs and hurdy-gurdies, made into songs and "facile arrangements;" in short, the valse of its day. At the last computation, 60,000 copies had been disposed of; and the copyright in the unexhausted and future sale was lately disposed of, I believe, for a sum of two hundred pounds. I had a fair share in some of this good fortune in the price of the next waltz, but not, of course, in proportion. Was not this an agreeable result from a short newspaper story—as flattering, too, as it was agreeable? For the story itself I received the sum of forty pounds. It was but a few columns long. I well remember the pleasure the commission gave me. It was to be done under pressure, as the time was short and presses were waiting. Things are written far better under such circumstances; there is more inspiration and "go." From

the various illustrated journals and magazines a woodcut often arrives, representing a young lady at a fancy ball, two children on a ghostly staircase, or something of the kind, with a request that I would illustrate *them*, instead of their illustrating *me*, by a story. This often taxes one's ingenuity sorely, as it will not do merely to bring in the scene in question, but it must be made of the essence of the story. This, however, is what is called "knack."

Thus omnivorous, it may be assumed that the stage was not likely to be overlooked. As a lesson in perseverance, it deserves to be noted that I was fifteen years struggling to find entrance to that carefully walled-up preserve. Once, after years of effort, I succeeded in getting a piece accepted, but the manager collapsed, as it is called, and I had to begin again. For my first farce I obtained ten pounds; for my second, twenty; and for my grand drama, in which I had worked with a partner, one hundred pounds. I hope, however, to do considerably more in this direction.

Two guineas, I should say, would comprise all my receipts in the direction of verse-making. Distinctly, I fear much is not to be done in this direction. Yet I console myself with the thought that many who have published volumes of poems have not made even this small sum.

In addition to this pleasant and profitable life, there are many incidental advantages. Your moderately successful author is often asked, as I am, to sit for his photograph for some "series," and is of course never charged for it. In nine cases out of ten, an application to any of the London managers secures you a gratuitous stall. For

years I have been a constant playgoer on these easy terms. So that now, when on a rare occasion I have to pay for a stall, it seems to border on a cruel imposition, as though the money had been taken from me unfairly. Such is the force of habit.

A great mistake in the diplomacy of authors is to be too grasping. Men cannot resist a present advantage in hand, and so sacrifice what is in the bush. One work of mine—a truly monstrous one for its carelessness—failed utterly—the only one that met such a fate. I was to have sixty pounds ; the publisher was in despair and disgusted, but I held his signed agreement. I nobly forbore, and tore my bond. But mark : when that was long forgotten, I repaired to him with another work. He was good enough to say that I had behaved so handsomely that he was ready to treat on satisfactory terms for the new work. So, I did not lose on the whole ; nor did he.

Publishers do not relish being "bested." As to "corrections" I could tell a curious thing. I am the author of a work in two volumes, numbering in all over a thousand pages, the corrections for which cost about as much as the original setting up in type! The sums were, I think, one hundred and forty and one hundred and fifty pounds. Yet the generous publisher, before paying what he had covenanted to pay, said he thought it right to put it to me whether this style of "correcting" was not excessive. He good-naturedly mulcted me only forty pounds, as my legitimate share of the cost.

As for my essays, sketches, descriptions, they are simply innumerable. It is agreeable work, and so lightly done

You covet something, or are extravagant to the tune of five pounds. You sit down for a morning (having found a subject in your last walk), and the debt is paid. Indeed, during these walks, it is wonderful how agreeably profit for mind and purse can be made. Being ever of an artistic turn, I began, some time ago, to work out, as I walked along, principles of criticism as applied to the buildings, houses, etc., in the streets, and soon elaborated a pleasant series. Extending this idea, I began to think how many unnoticed curious things there were in the London streets, old houses, doorways, etc.; and this I am now working out in a more elaborate series still. All this and more goes on with the greater labors, and used to represent with me from one hundred and fifty to two hundred pounds a year,—now not nearly so much. I put the sums from this source at about four thousand pounds. Adding all up, I should fix my total earnings at about fourteen thousand pounds, of which I retain, alas! but fifteen hundred duly and securely invested.

On these results, can writing be called a crutch or a walking-stick? It must be remembered, however, that I really used it as the walking-stick, having originally a small income of my own, and for the last ten years a large one.

The cheerful good humor of Mr. Fitzgerald's reminiscences finds a strong contrast in the following complaint of an American writer against the editors and publishers with whom he has been

thrown in contact. I copy again from the Contributors' Club of the *Atlantic Monthly*.

A DISGUSTED MAGAZINIST.

This truthful record of what a man has done in and made by literary work during the ten years to January 1, 1878, must be interesting to many, and of service to some,—the latter those who think of adopting literature as a profession.

In eight principal magazines published in those ten years, and of which five remained in existence on the 1st of January, 1878, I have had nineteen articles, for which my pay was $927. In five weekly publications my work has appeared nine times, and brought me $138. From two daily papers I have received $24 for reviews, and $52 for correspondence. Receipts from the above sources $1141. Then I wrote a short romance and published it at my own expense, getting the imprint of a book-house in New York. That netted me a profit of $198. During the time named I have written three other books of fiction, published by one of the most celebrated houses in the country. Of all, 4,600 copies were printed, and 4,500 sold, netting me at ten per cent., as copyright, $562 49, and paying to the publishers $3,302.57,—this at wholesale rates, and not deducting expenses of publication ; probably the publishers cleared but little more than the author. The sum total of my pay for literary labor is $1,901.49, and, estimating roughly, it has consumed about a year or fifteen months' time, at eight hours per day. I have had, fortunately, other occupations by which to eke

out a living. Of the four books, three are now out of print. One was republished in England. All appeared over a *nom de plume*. So did my other writings, except, perhaps, half a dozen, and in omitting my proper name I made a great mistake. Literary work without signature is a bond without interest. Let the young author remember this.

Having done now with the figures of this paper, I will give some incidents of my experience with editors and publishers. A manuscript of mine, ordered in December, had lain in an editor's hands three months. This fact I had mentioned to a gentleman who is one of our best and most voluminous magazine writers and novelists. He wrot eme : "Mr. Editor spoke most favorably in a recent letter of your ——, but did not explain the delay. * * * By the way, editors are sometimes unreasonable, even the best of them. If the —— magazine turns out too fastidious, or impracticable, or any thing of that sort, why not try the ——? Of course —— would not like this suggestion, but one must live and let live; the world is not for editors alone." Seven months after the letter from which the above is taken was received, the article referred to appeared in print, without recourse to the ——, and my friend, writing to me again, said, "I read —— last evening. I have read it through carefully, with entire satisfaction and with great pleasure, and even with surprise. Certainly it is extraordinarily well written, and is the best —— which I have ever seen in an American periodical. It must attract wide attention to you." It did not, and when published, after eleven months' de-

lay, payment did not come with its appearance in print. But a few lines to the magazine's publishers put me in possession of their check for $75. Without naming any price at the time the article was sent in, I had left that to the fairness of the editor, and I think he treated well enough a comparatively unknown writer, though the pay should have been, according to that magazine's custom per page, $104. One of our most popular magazinists wrote me once concerning the very small pay that the —— had sent me for a story: "Thirty dollars was very small pay for six pages, in small print, of matter that was readable, interesting, and worthy of insertion. At the same time, editors pay more for *notoriety* than for *quality*. Now there are several publics, and each has its celebrities. I am an old writer for the magazines, and therefore I get more than that, but I did not a few years ago. Even now I dare not ask above $10 a page, believing that that is all a magazine can afford except for an out-and-out notoriety. A new man must work on, painfully and patiently, for years, every now and then demanding a rise in his wages. There must be bargaining as well as writing. The next time you send a piece to ——, write your price at the top of the MS., thus: 'Price $60,' or, 'Price $80.' If he declines, send it on to the next, and the next. See how it will come out. I am sorry you find the road of authorship profitless. So it is with nearly all who try it. I am never less than a few hundred dollars in debt, and often wish that I had some other trade, more profitable,—a machinist's, for instance."

The editor of a magazine once accepted a contribution

of mine in this way : "Your story is not of the kind which has been usually found most attractive to our readers. It is, however, picturesquely conceived, and the interest fairly sustained, and I shall therefore be happy to insert it, paying on publication at five dollars a page." As this story had been returned by —— and ——, I accepted. It appeared in *eighteen* months from the date of the editor's letter, and I waited that time for the pay, $73. Meanwhile, I happened in the city where my editor reigned, and, laid flat by an acute attack of impecuniosity, I called at the office of the magazine and begged an advance of $5 (!) which was granted. Why tailors and authors must always wait for payment I cannot exactly understand.

I was once ambitious to write editorials for the *New York Daily* ——. Mr. A B was then the literary editor, and Mr. Y Z, as now, the commander-in-chief. I obtained a proper introduction to Mr. Y Z through a prominent politician, who was his personal friend. I had a pleasant and rather promising interview that ended in my leaving with him two MSS. on social subjects, which he promised to put in the hands of Mr. A B. A week or two after, my friend sent me the following letter, which he had received from Mr. Y Z :

"I herewith return Mr.——'s articles, and in doing so wish to say to him that he need not be discouraged in keeping on, as our best writers have been those who did not reach the point of excellence until after many failures. Let him send us articles as he may find subjects to write upon ; they shall be carefully and kindly considered, and used if possible, leading to perhaps a more permanent connection."

I was not discouraged, but kept on, until I had sent in five pieces, not one of which was accepted, and some of which, I firmly believe, were never opened by the managing editor. Four of these rejected contributions found market elsewhere, and one of them was copied in the Sunday edition after its refusal by the *Daily* ——.

In the memoirs of Count de Grammont (?) we read of an elegant French duellist who, whenever—and it was often—he sent his short sword clean into an antagonist, exclaimed, with pathetic courtesy, "Mille pardons!" This was like —— of the ——. He pierced you with a rejection, but he added an *amende*, as once he wrote to me: "Your work is always so good that I don't feel like losing any of it. The article just received exceeds our space. I should be glad if you would allow me *to exchange it for something else* of yours." Another magazine editor, returning a manuscript, sent these words: "Your MS. goes with this letter. It is one that will find hearty welcome in any magazine but this, where, because of certain, etc. I am obliged, etc. I think, if you will pardon the suggestion, that it would be eagerly accepted by George Macdonald's *Good Words*, published in London." I thankfully took the advice, paid over a dollar in postage, and inclosed a like amount, and that was the last I ever heard of what I thought was a good piece of work.

Nearly a year ago, I took an article to the editor of ——. He opened the sheets and read them through (at least twelve magazine pages) whilst I sat there. "First-rate!" then he said, "just what I want,—interesting and *timely*. I 'll take it. Call again to-morrow." I discounted

the payment with a fine dinner and a grand bottle of wine. In the morning I stepped in for my pay. "I have shown your MS. to Mr. ——. He says it must have illustrations. Can you supply them?" "No, it is impossible." As I went away, I asked: "What should I get for this article?" "Do not take less than one hundred dollars. Send it to the —— magazine, and it must be copied in England." I sent it,—always obeying an editor; and it hung fire for three months. I reclaimed it, and ere its *timeliness* was quite gone I sold it for half what the illustrated editor named.

So I might go on for columns concerning the anxieties, disappointments, and labors of literary work by one of small name,—aye, and these troubles come, too, more or less, to all authors except the great celebrities (*they* may be literary artists, mountebanks, scolds, or quacks), but I shall give only one more instance. The best piece of work I ever did went to a magazine with two editors, after having come back from four such journeys, and been accepted and after twenty days' thought rejected by another magazine. The junior editor returned it to me with these words, writing, as he probably supposed, to some entire novice in literature. The letter of advice came through a mutual friend: "It can't be used in the ——. I have written a letter giving him some suggestions as to how to make his work *marketable*. He certainly has ability; he knows how to view things, and *can express* himself with remarkable command of words. He now needs to *study* with great attention the *mode of making himself compactly impressive to the public*." The under-

scoring is my own. I may have smoked three pipes in succession over that patronizing epistle.

Thereafter I gave up my pen for eight months, and took to speculating in pigs. It was a new business, and had a flavor about it peculiarly recreative to a dead-beat author. There was a wild, gorgeous poetry in the statement (founded on figures that cannot lie, please remember) made me by my instigator to the porcine adventure. He—I mean the instigator—lived in a fine rooting country, six hundred miles off to the south. I had nothing to do but plan, administer, forward checks, and count my profits four months ahead. He was to act, execute, buy, and perhaps share my profits. If I could not be famous in letters, I would at least be rich in hogs. Alas, there are figures that, as has been said here and elsewhere perhaps, cannot lie, and there is hog cholera! —worse, far worse than editors and publishers. Write, write, if you will, young man, but for heaven's sake do not attempt the pig business. The latter, I know, requires more genius, but like all real labors of genius it will not pay. Its end is to make hashed sausage meat of you. What happened to me is of little consequence, except in the result—that I took up my pen again. It was heavier now, and worked greasily, but I had learned boldness. My first act was to send off the rejected MS. of nearly a year ago to the *other* editor of the same magazine. He was summering by the sea-side, separated from his junior. In forty-eight hours I received the following lines: "I accept with great pleasure your——. It is a study of extraordinary force and vividness, and, I take it,

must be from life. I wish you would do some more things like it."

Again we must remember that there are two sides to every question. A couple of months later the same magazine, in the same department, extended a hearing to the other side of our magazinist's story in the following reply from a member of that editorial brotherhood against which his complaints were laid.

AN EDITOR'S STORY.

Being myself a frequent contributor to periodicals, and the author of several books not entirely unknown, though of unequal and probably not of very great merit (if I am to judge by their small sale in the face of very favorable notices), I was struck by the confessions of a contributor in the August Club, because they afforded fresh proof of the unreasonableness characterizing most members of the literary profession. So far as I can make out, from his account of his experience, editors have taken a somewhat unusual interest in his work, and have made the exception in his case of writing him letters with their own hands, in the hope of softening the blow of rejection, giving him credit for what there was of good in his work, and encouraging him to try again. In this I see nothing very offensive; but my fellow-contributor appears to regard every one of those friendly attempts on the part of editors as so much gratuitous insolence and oppression. Now I have been through a checkered experience as a

contributor to magazines, extending over nearly ten years, and have also served as an editor long enough to be thoroughly familiar with both sides of the situation touched upon. I confess that, as a contributor, I used to look upon the considerate explanation of editors very much as your August complainant does. I considered myself one of the most ill-used scribblers who ever put pen to paper. I was very apt to write sarcastic replies to editors who rejected my compositions with a few words of criticism or suggestion. And, indeed, there is no doubt that the mortification which young writers or novices in the art undergo, on finding their work declined, is a source of intense suffering which only time and resolution can abate. But one thing I had the sense to keep in mind, during my early struggles: and that was that, however editors might err in their judgment, I really *was* a beginner, and probably had a great deal to learn. Therefore, resentful or not, I always pondered the advice I got, and I owe to it much of my advance toward success (for people assure me I am successful, though I don't seem to be sure of it myself). Now, when I became an editor, I was very glad that I had had so much modesty, for my eyes were soon widely opened to the inexhaustible petulance, freakishness, arrogance, and conceit of the class known as contributors, and it was a comfort to know that I, as a contributor, had possessed one saving grace. Whereas, before, I had known only a few persons imbued with the same grievance against magazines that I cherished, I now came into confidential relations with some thousands of similar aspirants; and I was at times

very much disgusted with them. So absurdly unreasonable, so inconsiderate, so centered upon the agitations of their own little souls were they, that I often felt as if magazines, by exciting these people to write, were encouraging an alarming growth of insanity, which would neutralize whatever good their publications might be doing. I despised myself for having resembled them. And this, notwithstanding that I had met with treatment from editors far more annoying than any the confessing contributor relates; as I could prove, were I in the habit of publishing confidential correspondence.

The result is that the contributor's stories impress me as pointless, except as showing lack of imagination on his part. He does not seem for a moment to have pictured to himself the position of the editor. For example, what is his ground of complaint against the editor who wanted to take his article but could not, on account of length, and wished to exchange it for another? He italicizes the word *exchange*. Was not that a proper word? I think it expresses the editor's meaning exactly; he wished to bind himself, in a degree, to take *some* article from Mr. ——, although he could not print the one then in hand. Again, the editor of an illustrated magazine liked one of ——'s articles, and wished to take it. He asked him to call next day. Editors never do this if they have accepted a paper without reserve; so it is probable that Mr. —— is mistaken in supposing that this editor said unconditionally, "I'll take it." Next day, the editor (who had some obligations to the proprietors of the magazine, or to his senior, if he was a subordinate) found that, on consulta-

tion with the other persons controlling the publication, he would be unable to use the article without illustrations. What should we think of a merchant who published as a crying outrage the fact that he had offered B some goods for sale, and B had thought he would buy them, but on consultation with his partners found it impracticable to buy? The contributor relates with quiet bitterness how, after his receiving back from the Daily —— four articles which he then sold elsewhere, one of said articles was copied into the Sunday edition of the Daily ——. But what does that prove, except that they were not suited to the daily paper? The editor of a Sunday edition often has nothing whatever to do with the week-day issues, and it is not incumbent on those in charge of the week-day issues to turn over MSS. to the manager of the Sunday edition, unless requested by the author to do so. The contributor leaves quite out of account this business aspect of the thing.

His most terrible recital, however, is about a junior editor returning a MS. which the senior editor of the same magazine accepted a year later, on its being sent again. I can give the Club the real history of that affair, and think it is proper and will be instructive to do so. The article was sent to the junior by a "mutual" friend. It was with pure sympathy and interest that the assistant examined it. The article was full of merit; but in reporting upon it to the senior, the subaltern, knowing the crowded state of the magazine and the endless trouble which his chief experienced in squeezing in the monthly contents (which always overran the limit and had to be

"cut down"), was obliged to say that he thought the sketch would need some compression in one portion. That was his opinion. "Then," said the senior editor, "I cannot consider it, in the present state of the magazine." That was a good business reason, which the senior was perfectly right in acting upon. I think the junior was wrong in his opinion, if it applied to the sketch solely as a performance; but he was right, in view of the pressure upon the magazine's space. He was hired to give opinions, and did so conscientiously; the senior had some faith in his judgment, and to a certain extent consulted it. If both had had to read every MS. submitted, how much time would have been saved by having an assistant? As to the sequel: the article was sent again, and came at a time when the managing editor did not feel the exigencies of space so keenly as before. When the junior saw it in print he was genuinely delighted. "Mr. —— has got in at last," was his thought, with a thrill of pleasure at the success of a fellow-workman. Having examined nearly two thousand MSS. since reading Mr. ——'s, he remembered only his favorable impression on reading it; the circumstances of the case came back to him on reading the confessions published in the Club eight months later. It is natural that he should feel some pain on seeing how his few hasty words, meant for good advice, had been treasured in the contributor's mind for twenty months as an instance of offensive patronage. Does it not seem to you as if the contributor may have made a mistake, and done some injustice? The junior wrote to him as "to some entire novice." Well, according to his own account of himself

he *was* a novice. Moreover, the junior had read previous MSS. from him, which were diffuse and poor, and showed him to be wanting in some of the qualifications of an acceptable author.

The trouble with writers in general is (1) that they cannot understand why their efforts don't suit every one as well as themselves; (2) that they refuse to consider the business relation of author, editor, and publisher, which may not be ideal, but is very plain and simple; (3) that they are offended when MSS. are returned with a printed form giving no special reasons, and that the necessarily imperfect and hasty attempts of editors to pave the way to success by advice, infuriate the would-be contributors more than printed forms or even total and eternal silence would.

It is true that authors are subject to vexatious delays in printing, are sometimes underpaid, and are often virtually borrowed from by the retention of their capital (in form of MSS.) for a considerable term without payment of interest. But these difficulties are not greater than the obstacles in almost every occupation, which people never dream of writing about. My own experience has been, that in spite of the wearing nature of my employment and all the troubles which beset an author, together with some unusual misfortunes, I have made a better living, and advanced more rapidly, than any one of my age among my acquaintances, during the same period, in other employments; unless they have had extraneous advantages of inherited wealth, or opportunity, or extraordinary downright good luck. Since I have practised

editing, I have written for magazines and papers with which I am not connected, sometimes succeeding and sometimes not. Even the magazine on which I have labored as an editor could not always accept my contributions. But knowing, as I now do, the ceaseless and exhausting demands on the strength, time, sympathy, and patience of editors, I am simply amazed at the considerateness which they have in the main shown me, and continue to show whenever I add myself to the thousands of people who are bothering the life out of these much-maligned gentlemen.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### FIRST APPEARANCE IN PRINT.

The first taste of type—A great moment in the young author's life—Dickens, Haydon, The Country Parson, Longfellow, Mark Twain, Harriet Martineau, James Parton, and others quoted.

"'TIS pleasant, sure, to see one's self in print," says Lord Byron, and a great many authors have testified to the truth of the saying. We all remember Dickens' story of his first taste of type, how when that earliest effusion of his, dropped stealthily one evening at twilight, with fear and trembling, into a dark letter-box in a dark office up a dark court in Fleet street, made its appearance in all the glory of print, he walked down to Westminster Hall, and turned into it for half an hour, "because my eyes were so dimmed with joy and pride that they could not bear the street, and were not fit to be seen there." Through a veil of rather Dickensy exaggeration, Mr. Albert Smith, in one of his fictions, evidently presents his own experiences when he draws an elaborate sketch of a young au-

thor luxuriating in the scrutiny of himself in print —the mere smell of the wet ink and paper affording him unmixed satisfaction for some time,—after which he betakes himself to cutting the pages slowly, regarding each page separately as a mere artistic effect of light and shade; next trying various devices of folding and opening, looking at the paper as a whole from various points of view,—at arm's length, with his eyes half closed, with his head nearly upside down; all before he could bring himself to settle down to the literature of the work, reserved as a *bonne bouche*, to be seriously read, marked, and inwardly digested, line upon line, paragraph upon paragraph.

Haydon, the painter, has given a vivid picture of the fluster of elation with which he greeted the appearance in print of his first article. "Never," says he, "shall I forget that Sunday morning. In came the paper, wet and uncut; up went the breakfast-knife—cut, cut, cut. Affecting not to be interested, I turned the pages open to dry, and, to my certain immortality, saw, with delight not to be expressed, the first sentence of my letter. I put down the paper, walked round the room, looked at *Macbeth* (his picture on that subject), made the tea, buttered the toast, put in the sugar with that inexpressible suppressed chuckle of delight that always attends a condescending relinquishment of an an-

ticipated rapture till one is perfectly ready. Who has not felt this? Who has not done this?"

In one way or another, perhaps we all have. Such pleasure as may be found in seeing one's name or one's belongings in a conspicuous position, is a pleasure that may be enjoyed by other men than authors. A lawyer's, a doctor's, even a business man's sign-board has no doubt been an object of keenest delight to the owner in his first proud contemplation of it. Mr. Meek, in Dickens' sketch, is quite overpowered when he comes upon his own advertisement, "Births, Mrs. Meek of a son." "When I saw that announcement in the *Times*, I dropped the paper. I had put it in myself, and paid for it, but it looked so noble that it overpowered me. As soon as I could compose my feelings I took the paper up to Mrs. Meek's bedside. 'Maria Jane,' said I (I allude to Mrs. Meek), 'you are now a public character.' We read the review of our child several times with feelings of the strongest emotion, and I sent the boy who cleans the boots and shoes to the office for fifteen copies. No reduction was made on taking that quantity."

We all remember how Goldsmith, in his college career, used to write street ballads, which he sold to save himself from absolute starvation, and how at night he used to creep out to hear them sung. "Happy night, to him worth all the dreary days!"

exclaims Mr. Forster. "Hidden by some dusky wall, or creeping within darkling shadows of the ill-lighted streets, this poor neglected sizar watched, waited, lingered there, for the only effort of his life which had not wholly failed. Few and dull perhaps the beggar's audience at first, but more thronging, delighted, as he shouted forth his newly gotten ware. Cracked enough, I doubt not, were those ballad-singing tones; very harsh, extremely discordant, and passing from loud to low without meaning or melody; but not the less did the sweetest music which this earth affords fall with them on the ear of Goldsmith." Dr. Walker in his life of Burns speaks of once having found the poet at the house of a mutual friend, listening with the keenest interest to his own verses which a young lady sung and accompanied on the harpsichord. "In this occupation he was so totally absorbed that it was difficult to draw his attention from it for a moment." And another of his biographers tells us that when, for the first time, Burns heard a Glasgow artist sing some of his songs, he cried out with fervent frankness, "I'll be hanged if I ever knew half their merit until now!"

The Country Parson, for his part, needs no artificial adjuncts of music or of song to enable him to taste the sweets of his own essays. He makes this candid admission:

"It is pleasant for a very small author to sit down on a rustic seat, under a shady tree, or on a rock by the sea, with the murmuring water lapping at one's feet, and there peacefully to read over one's essay. A distinguished American author has put on record the feelings with which he read his own first book. He says frankly, 'I never read a more interesting volume!' Under the shadow of that illustrious precedent it may be confessed that though, when busy with serious work, you have something else to do than read your own compositions, yet in a season of leisure it is light and pleasant employment for an author to do so." And in another of his works he welcomes the arrival of the postman who brings him the daily pages of pleasing type, in which things look so different from what they look in the cramped magazine printing in which those essays "Concerning" various things first made their appearance. Great is the enjoyment, he declares, which an advancing volume by one's self affords to a simple mind. And he cites the example of Southey, who, after writing more than almost any English author of the century, preserved to the last the keen interest of a quite fresh writer in his own articles—chafing and fretting if a new Quarterly were a day late in reaching him, and no doubt reading his own paper first. Southey, indeed, was quite an old man when he wrote to Mrs. Bray, of

Tavistock, "If you have as much pleasure in reading a proof-sheet as I have, I may wish you joy of your employment." And about the same time he tells his former school-fellow, Charles Wynn, "The greatest pleasure I have with a book of my own, is in cutting open the leaves when it first comes."

Miss Braddon declares that she can never again feel the exquisite emotion aroused by the *first* proof-sheet of her first story, as it was presented to her "very badly printed on very bad paper, and embellished with an oblong smudge which demanded no small effort of imagination on the part of the beholder to accept as an illustration."

In Longfellow's "Hyperion," Paul Flemming reads a passage from a work "by a Professor of Philosophy at Halle," in which the philosopher avows that the sight of a proof-sheet is quite as delightful to him as a walk in the Prater of Vienna. "I fill my pipe very quietly, take out my inkstand and pens, seat myself in the corner of my sofa, read, correct, and now for the first time really set about thinking what I have written. To see this origin of a book, this metamorphosis of manuscript into print, is a delight to which I give myself up entirely. Look you, this melancholy pleasure, which would have furnished the departed Voss with worthy matter for more than one blessed Idyl—(the more so, as on such occasions I am generally arrayed in a morning

gown, though, I am sorry to say, not a calamanco one, with great flowers),—this melancholy pleasure has already grown here in Halle to a sweet, pedantic habit. Since I began my hermit's life here I have been printing; and so long as I remain here, I shall keep on printing. In all probability, I shall die with a proof-sheet in my hand."

Charles Mathews, the elder, "commenced author" at the early age of fourteen with a translation of the Princess Cleves in a monthly magazine. It was rather a modest beginning, but the delight with which he gazed on his first proof was, he tells us, boundless. He thought the eyes of Europe were upon him. He was quite sure that the ladies who took in the work would unite in calling upon the editor to insist that C. M. should declare himself. "That is an unparalleled epoch," says O'Keefe, "when a young poet first sees his effusions in type." And he tells how hugely tickled he was after sending some verses on Spring to a Dublin journal at being hailed next day by an attorney's clerk, a particular friend, with the exultant shout, "Jack, your song is in the paper!"

Leigh Hunt owns that when, after much hesitation, he had made up his mind to offer his first prose endeavors to the editors of the *Traveller*, he was greatly surprised at the gay manner with which they were accepted. "And what added to my astonish-

ment," he continues, "was a perquisite of five or six copies of the paper which I enjoyed every Saturday when my essays appeared, and with which I used to reissue from Ball Court in a state of transport." Mark Twain was not only surprised at having his early articles accepted (they were in the form of letters addressed from the mining districts to the *Virginia City Enterprise*), but from that time his good opinion of the editors steadily declined. "It seemed to me they might have found something better to fill up with than my literature." A cheerful modesty not an innate quality of every aspiring author.

Douglas Jerrold, when a mere boy, was a compositor employed upon a periodical called "Arliss's Magazine," and there he commenced his literary career by dropping a criticism on "Der Freischütz" into the editor's box. A night of anxiety and doubt was succeeded by a day of great elation when the editor next morning handed him his essay to compose, with a note addressed to the anonymous contributor requesting further contributions. His sisters have told of his occasional transports of boisterous delight, when he would burst into the house, waving a little pamphlet in his hand and shouting, "It 's in! it 's in!"

Benjamin Franklin's entrance into print was made in a very similar manner. He was an apprentice in

the office of his brother James, then printing the *New England Courant*. The contributors to this paper used to meet together in the office and crow over the public approbation that greeted their articles in a manner which excited Franklin's emulation. So one night he slipped an anonymous article in a disguised hand under the office door. Next morning it was found and duly submitted to the circle of contributors. "They read it and commented upon it in my hearing," says Franklin, "and I had the exquisite pleasure of finding that it met with approbation, and that in their different guesses at the author, none were named but some character among us for learning and ingenuity." Thus encouraged, the young author continued his contributions, mystifying his brother more and more, until, finally, his small fund of sense for such performances, as he puts it, was exhausted, and he divulged the secret. The avowal of authorship, he says, raised him very highly in the opinion of his brother and his circle, at the same time that this increased importance kindled vanity in one brother and jealousy in the other, and so led up to the final rupture between them.

Artemus Ward, at the age of fifteen, was another printer's boy, whose appearance as an author was the result of his having slyly slipped a contribution in a disguised hand into the editorial box. It was

a sketch called "The Surrender of Cornwallis," and the editor was much pleased with it. "I went to the theatre that evening," said Artemus, in recalling the incident; "had a good time of it, and thought I was the greatest man in Boston."

When Whittier was a lad of nineteen his first poem was published in the *Free Press*, a weekly paper owned and edited by William Lloyd Garrison in Newburyport. The poem had been left under the door of the editorial office, and for several weeks young Whittier heard no more from it. He was then working upon his father's rocky farm in Haverhill, and his father was a patron of the *Free Press*. Week by week the paper arrived, and the heart of the young poet sank within him as he looked in vain for his verses. One day he was at work with his uncle Moses, repairing the stone fence by the highway, when the postman came along on horseback, and to save going to the house with the paper, he tossed it to young Whittier. It was opened with trembling fingers. The surprise of finding his poem at the "head of the corner" was so bewildering that he was dazed by it; and he says he stood looking at it a long time, and is sure he did not read a word. At length his uncle called him back to his senses by bidding him keep at work. No success in future years has ever stirred such a tumult of emotion, as may well be believed. Garrison was so impressed

with his new contributor's work, that he sought him out, coming up to Haverhill on horseback to interview him. When Garrison called, young Whittier was at work in the field. He was told a gentleman was at the house inquiring for him. Nobody had ever called for him before, and he felt like running away. But he got into the house by the back door, "slicked up," and soon stood in the presence of the young editor, who encouraged him to make good use of the talent he had displayed. Whittier's father came in during the interview, and begged Garrison not to put such notions into the head of his son. But it was too late: the damage was done. This was the first meeting of the two men, afterward so intimately associated in anti-slavery.

Thomas Hood tells us that his first appearance in print, which was made in a Dundee journal, did not elate him as much as might have been expected. "According to the popular notion," he says, "I ought to have been quite up in my stirrups, if not standing on the saddle, at seeing myself, for the first strange time, set up in type. Memory recalls, however, but a very moderate share of exaltation, which was totally eclipsed, moreover, by the exuberant transports of an accessory before the fact, whom, methinks, I still see in my mind's eye, rushing out of the printing-office with the wet sheet steaming in his hand, and fluttering all along the High Street,

to announce breathlessly that 'we were in.' But G. was an indifferent scholar, even in English, and therefore thought the more highly of this literary feat."

From Miss Martineau's Autobiography I quote the following account of her first appearance in print:

I suppose I must tell what that first paper was, though I had much rather not, for I am so heartily ashamed of the whole business as never to have looked at the article since the first flutter of it went off. It was on "Female Writers on Practical Divinity." I wrote away, in my abominable scrawl of those days, on foolscap paper, feeling mightily like a fool all the time. I told no one, and carried my expensive packet to the post-office myself, to pay the postage. I took the letter *V* for my signature—I cannot at all remember why. The time was very near the end of the month, I had no definite expectation that I should ever hear any thing of my paper; and certainly did not suppose it could be in the forthcoming number. That number was sent in before service-time on a Sunday morning. My heart may have been beating when I laid hands on it; but it thumped prodigiously when I saw my article there, and, in the Notices to Correspondents, a request to hear more from V., of Norwich. There is certainly something entirely peculiar in the sensation of seeing one's self in print for the first time: the lines burn themselves in upon the brain in a way of which black ink is incapable in any other mode. So I felt that

day, when I went about with my secret. I have said what my eldest brother was to us—in what reverence we held him. He was just married, and he and his bride asked me to return from chapel with them to tea. After tea he said, "Come now, we have had plenty of talk ; I will read you something" ; and he held out his hand for the new *Repository*. After glancing at it, he exclaimed, "They have got a new hand here Listen." After a paragraph, he repeated, "Ah ! this is a new hand ; they have had nothing so good as this for a long while." (It would be impossible to convey to any who do not know the *Monthly Repository* of that day, how very small a compliment this was.) I was silent, of course. At the end of the first column, he exclaimed about the style, looking at me in some wonder at my being as still as a mouse. Next (and well I remember his tone, and thrill to it still) his words were : "What a fine sentence that is ! Why, do you not think so ?" I mumbled out, sillily enough, that it did not seem any thing particular. "Then," said he, "you were not listening. I will read it again. There, now !" As he still got nothing out of me, he turned round upon me, as we sat side by side on the sofa, with "Harriet, what is the matter with you ? I never knew you so slow to praise any thing before." I replied, in utter confusion, "I never could baffle anybody. The truth is, that paper is mine." He made no reply ; read on in silence, and spoke no more till I was on my feet to come away. He then laid his hand upon my shoulder, and said gravely (calling me "dear" for the first time), "Now, dear, leave it to other women to make shirts and

darn stockings; and do you devote yourself to this." I went home in a sort of dream, so that the squares of the pavement seemed to float before my eyes. That evening made me an authoress.

Mr. James Parton, in one of his books, has given an account of how he first made his appearance in print. He was then a teacher, and, like most teachers, did a great deal of work for very little pay. The novel of "Jane Eyre" had just come out, and the sex of the author was subject for much conjectural comment. Mr. Parton was convinced that the author was a woman, and one night sat down to write out the reasons for his conviction, which he left next morning at the office of the editor of the *Home Journal*, Mr. N. P. Willis. The rest of the story he shall tell in his own words.

I had not gone twenty steps before I saw the transaction in a very disagreeable light. I felt that I had done a very foolish thing; that neither Mr. Willis nor the public needed any instruction on the authorship of this novel, and that if I could only get my essay back again I should gladly throw it into the fire. However, the deed was done, and the consequences must be borne.

Not being aware at that time how far in advance of their date periodicals were manufactured, I opened the *Home Journal* of that very week with eager and trembling hands to see if my profound discourse upon "Jane Eyre" had appeared. Of course it had not. The *Home*

*Journal* for that week had been printed several days before my ingenious essay was written. By this time my faith in the aforesaid disquisition had partially revived, so that when I saw that it was not printed, I experienced a ridiculous mixture of disappointment and relief. When the next number appeared, I again seized the paper with eagerness, and rapidly scanned its contents. No essay on "Jane Eyre"! Then I gave it up, wondering how I could ever have been so foolish as to write on such a subject, or to write at all, for so elegant and distinguished a periodical. But I was not to escape so easily. Four or five weeks after I had delivered my packet I happened to be down town on a Saturday morning, and bought a copy of the *Home Journal* at a book-store, then kept under the Astor House. Before putting the paper into my pocket, I gave one careless glance at the clearly-printed, handsome first page, and there, behold, my article! And not only that, but before it were a few lines written by Mr. Willis himself, calling attention to the piece and paying a compliment to the writer. I am afraid the reader will think me very silly, but as I have begun the story I may as well finish it. The sight of my poor little essay, so fairly printed in such a conspicuous place of such a paper, with the few encouraging words of the editor, threw me into a perfect ecstasy, and I felt that I must tell some one of my good fortune. The nearest person at hand whom I knew was the foreman of the *Tribune* press-room. To his excavation in the bowels of the earth I directed rapid steps. I found him in the engine-room, black from head to foot, from an exploration he had just been making of

the boiler, which needed repairs. His mind being preoccupied with this important duty, he was in no mood to sympathize with my exultant feelings. Nevertheless, he gave me a friendly though very evanescent smile, and taking the clean page which I presented to him with the tip of his intensely black thumb and finger, conveyed it to his desk, assuring me that he would read it with the greatest attention by and by. No doubt he kept his word, but as he had never heard of Currer Bell or her novel, I am afraid I subjected his good nature to a test too severe.

## CHAPTER IX.

### LITERARY HEROES AND HERO WORSHIP.

Traces and tokens of fame—Gratifying tributes paid to genius—Curious evidences of regard—The discomforts of fame—Harriet Martineau on literary lionizing.

"I WOKE one morning and found myself famous," is the epigrammatic form in which Byron chronicles one of the most astonishing popular successes in literary history. And although in the very poem which brought him this sudden burst of fame he affects indifference to either fame or obloquy,—

> Ill may such contests now the spirit move
> Which heeds nor keen reproof nor partial praise,—

yet we know well enough that few men have given a more delighted welcome to the incense of flattery. In his journal he frequently makes careful entry of such traces and evidences of fame as come to his knowledge. What tickled him

most of all, apparently (apparently, I say, but there is no reason to doubt the fact except that he asserts it), was the extension of his fame abroad. He exults over the information that his rhymes are very popular in the United States. "These are the first tidings that have ever sounded like Fame to my ears—to be read on the banks of the Ohio! To be popular in a rising and far country has a kind of posthumous *feel* very different from the ephemeral éclat and fêteing, buzzing and partying compliments of the well-dressed multitude." And a few months later, on finding in a Java Gazette a controversy as to the respective merits of himself and Tom Moore, he writes exultingly to the latter, "Only think of our setting paper warriors in array in the Indian seas. Does not this sound like Fame —something almost like *posterity?* It is something to have scribblers squabbling about us five thousand miles off, while we are agreeing so well at home." This Java controversy evidently made a great impression upon Byron's mind, for six years later he refers to the matter again in his journal with much complacency: "There 's Fame for you at six-and-twenty! Alexander had conquered India at the same age, but I doubt if he was disputed about, or his conquests compared with Indian Bacchus, at Java."

Tom Moore himself had more than one tale of

Transatlantic reputation to tell, as Henry Luttrell testifies:

> I' m told, dear Moore, your lays are sung—
> Can it be true, you lucky man ?—
> By moonlight in the Persian tongue
> Along the streets of Ispahan.

When in America, at Niagara Falls, the little bard writes jubilantly to his mother that a poor watchmaker to whom he had entrusted a difficult job had refused all pay for it, begging him to accept of the service as a small tribute of admiration and respect. "This," cries Moore, "is the very nectar of life, and I hope, I *trust* it is not vanity to which the cordial owes all its sweetness." Tributes of this kind were never wanting at home. Coming out one night from a dinner-party, in company with Washington Irving, he found that all the cabs had been snapped up by others. A rain-storm had sprung up, and the prospect of footing it home was not pleasant. Luckily, a common cad noticed his plight, and running up eagerly inquired, "Fetch you a cab, Mr. Moore? Sure, ain't I the man that patronizes your Melodies." Fetch a cab he did, and after closing the door he whispered confidentially in the poet's ear, "Mind, whiniver you call a cab, Misthur Moore, just call for Tim Flaherty, and I 'm your man." "Now," exclaims "Misthur" Moore, "this I call *fame*, and

of a somewhat more agreeable kind than that of Dante, whom the women in the street found out by the marks of hell-fire on his beard." Again, when he was on a flying visit to Edinburgh, he went with Scott and Lockhart to the theatre. The audience stared as the party filed into the box, and immediately the cry went round, "Eh, yon 's Sir Walter, wi' Lockhart, and wha 's the wee bit bodie wi' the pawkie een? Wow, but it 's Tom Moore, just. Scott! Scott! Moore! Moore!" and then came thunders of shouts, cheers, bravoes, and applause. "But Scott," says an eye-witness, "would not rise to appropriate these tributes. One could see that he urged Moore to do so, and he, though modestly reluctant, at last yielded, and bowed hand on heart with much animation. The cry for Scott was then redoubled. He gathered himself up, and, with a benevolent bend, acknowledged this deserved welcome. The orchestra played alternately Scotch and Irish melodies."

Macaulay mentions having a pleasant talk with Rogers, in the course of which the latter spoke of the curiosity and interest which attached to the persons of Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron. When Sir Walter dined once at a gentleman's in London, all the servant-maids in the house asked leave to stand in the passage and see him pass. He was greatly flattered at this token of esteem.

When Lord Byron passed through Florence, Rogers was there. They had a good deal of conversation, and Rogers accompanied him to his carriage. The inn had fifty windows in front. All the windows were crowded with women, mostly Englishwomen, to catch a glance at their favorite poet. Among them were some at whose houses he had often been in England, and with whom he had lived on friendly terms. He would not notice them, nor return their salutations. Rogers was the only person that he spoke to.

Very gratifying was the homage paid to Scott's genius in London by a compatriot of his—a sergeant of dragoons. On the night after the coronation of George IV, Sir Walter, returning home from the banquet at Westminster, found himself locked in the crowd near Whitehall. A space for the dignitaries and big-wigs was kept clear at that point by the Scots Greys. Scott appealed to the sergeant to allow him to pass out into the open space in the middle of the street. The man curtly refused. It was against orders. It was impossible. Just then a friend happened to call to Scott by name. "What!" cried the dragoon, "Sir Walter Scott? He shall get through anyhow! Make room, men, for Sir Walter Scott, our illustrious countryman!" "Sir Walter Scott! God bless him!" responded the men. He was in a moment within the guarded lines of safety.

Balzac somewhere relates an incident that occurred to him when travelling in Russia with some friends. One night, having been overtaken by darkness, hospitality was asked and cheerfully granted at a château. One of the ladies hurried away to speed the preparation of refreshments, and just as she re-entered the room with a dish of cakes for the visitors, she caught Balzac's name uttered by one of his companions. Whereupon straightway, in joyous surprise, she made a sudden movement, let the dish drop from her hands, and all was smash and ruins at her feet. "Was not that real glory?" asks Balzac.

When Heine, the greatest of the lyric poets of Germany, was a student at Göttingen, he and his companions used to frequent an inn presided over by a fascinating little maiden named Lottchen, whose good looks and blooming color and good humor, and quick and dexterous way of serving her guests, made her a general favorite. Now, Lottchen was a highly proper young person, and so when Heine, who had long been in the habit of laughing and joking with her, one day went farther, and took her round the waist and tried to kiss her, she tore herself away with indignation, reproaching him so scornfully for his presumption, that Heine left quite crestfallen, and resolved never to come back again. He did return, but with the intention of taking no notice

whatever of Lottchen. What was his surprise, however, to find that Lottchen, when she saw him, ran up to him, and said with a laugh, "I have forgiven you, Herr Heine, for you are not the same as the other gentlemen students. *Sure, you are already as famous as our professors.* I have read your songs. Oh, how beautiful they are! The 'Song of the Churchyard' I know by heart, and now, Herr Heine, you can kiss me in the presence of all the gentlemen, but you must be really industrious and write more of such pretty poems."

Macaulay cries laughingly in one of his letters to Thomas Ellis, "At last I have attained true glory. As I walked through Fleet Street the day before yesterday, I saw a copy of Hume at a bookseller's window, with the following label: 'Only £2 2s. Hume's History of England in eight volumes, highly valuable as an introduction to Macaulay.' I laughed so convulsively that the other people who were staring at the books, took me for a poor demented gentleman. Alas for poor David! As for me, only one height of renown yet remains to be attained. I am not yet in Madame Tussaud's waxwork. I live, however, in hope of seeing one day an advertisement of a new group of figures—Mr. Macaulay in one of his own coats, conversing with Mr. Silk Buckingham in Oriental costume, and Mr. Robert Montgomery in full canonicals."

And in a later letter, after mentioning that he has seen the hippopotamus, "both asleep and awake, and I can assure you that, awake or asleep, he is the ugliest of the works of God," he goes on to say, "You must hear of my triumphs. Thackeray swears that he was eye-witness and ear-witness of the proudest event of my life. Two damsels were about to pass that door-way which we, on Monday, in vain attempted to enter, when I was pointed out to them. 'Mr. Macaulay!' cried the lovely pair; 'is that Mr. Macaulay? Never mind the hippopotamus!' And having paid a shilling to see Behemoth, they left him in the very moment he was about to display himself to them in order to see—but spare my modesty. I can wish for nothing more on earth, now that Mme. Tussaud, in whose pantheon I once hoped for a place, is dead." Demosthenes owned that he was pleased when even a fishwoman in Athens pointed him out. Hazlitt confesses to a similar weakness. "I like," he says, "to be pointed out in the street, or to hear people ask in Mr. Powell's court, *which is Mr. Hazlitt?* This is to me a pleasing extension of one's personal identity. Your name so repeated leaves an echo like music on the ear; it stirs the blood like the sound of a trumpet." It wasn't so pleasant for Horne Tooke, on taking his seat in a theatre with Rogers, to hear some one behind him stage-whisper to a

neighbor, "There 's that rascal Horne Tooke." Chateaubriand in his Mémoires d' outre Tombe asserts that the most vivid pleasure he ever experienced was in finding himself honored with marks of serious interest both in France and in foreign lands. "It has sometimes been my fortune, while resting myself in a village inn, to see a father and mother enter with their son. They brought me their child, they said, in order that he might thank me." Of course he protests that it is not vanity which caused him the gratification he then experienced. For, as he sagely points out, how could it affect his vanity that certain worthy but obscure rustics should come to tell him of their gratitude in such a place, where no one could hear them!

Sydney Smith was delighted when a young American told him that the two things he had been most anxious to see in England were — Sydney Smith and Lord Macaulay. And again he says he has heard that one of the American ministers in England was so oppressed by the numbers of his countrymen applying for introductions that he was obliged at last to set up sham Sydney Smiths and false Macaulays. "But they can't have been good counterfeits: for a most respectable American, on his return home, was heard describing Sydney Smith as a thin, grave, dull old fellow; and as to Macaulay (said he) I never met a more silent man in all my life!"

Indeed, hero worship, and particularly the worship of intellectual heroes, is one of the generous traits of the American people. It may sometimes lead us into ridiculous excesses, but the excesses themselves are only the ugly side of a good and healthy trait.

Dickens praises our nation in a rather patronizing fashion for the unaffected admiration which it paid to Washington Irving. "I sincerely believe," he says, speaking of a public reception which he attended at Washington, "that in all the madness of American politics, few public men would have been so earnestly, devotedly, and affectionately caressed as this most charming writer; and I have seldom respected a public assembly more than I did this eager throng, when I saw them turning with one mind from noisy orators and officers of state, and flocking with a generous and honest impulse round the man of quiet pursuits; grateful to him with their whole hearts for the store of graceful fancies he had poured out among them." And, certainly, the ovation tendered to Dickens himself on his first visit to this country is something unparalleled in the history of literature. No wonder the people which had given so enthusiastic a welcome to this young foreigner were amazed and indignant when he went home and ridiculed them and made even the civilities he had received a subject for caricature.

Although lionizing has its kindly and not unpleasant features, nevertheless to a man of any real worth and sincerity the indiscriminate adulation of flatterers must become the most nauseous form of boredom. Washington Irving tells us that though at first it was pleasant to be sought after and pointed out as a popular author, the pleasure soon palled and finally turned into absolute discomfort. "It is quite a peculiar case," says Schiller in his correspondence, "to have a literary name. The few men of worth and consideration who offer you their intimacy on that score, and whose regard is really worth coveting, are too disagreeably counterweighted by the baleful swarm of creatures who keep humming round you like so many flesh-flies, gape at you as if you were a monster, and condescend, moreover, on the strength of one or two blotted sheets, to present themselves as colleagues." Tennyson's complaints of the importunities of sight-seekers who, when denied admittance into his residence, climb upon the walls of his garden to stare at the lion within, have often been made public. Carlyle, in his later years, was almost driven frantic by this class of beings, and it is to be regretted that among them American tourists were not the least conspicuous for their number and importunity. It was probably the recollection of what he had suffered in this way that prompted Carlyle's famous definition of America as

a nation consisting of thirty millions of bores. The philosopher's reception of his admirers was frequently rude enough to deter any second attempt. George Gilfillan was at one time a Carlyle enthusiast, and made a tour of Great Britain with a lecture on the Master's character and writings. His engagements taking him within a convenient distance, he made bold to call upon the Sage at his house in Chelsea. On ringing the bell Carlyle himself opened the door.

"Who are you?" he asked in the gruff, abrupt way he had with strangers whom he suspected to be mere curiosity-mongers.

"I am George Gilfillan," was the reply, "and I have been lecturing about you through the country."

"You have! have you? Damn your impudence! Good morning!"

Mr. Gilfillan's lectures are said to have come to a sudden close, and even the name of Carlyle for many a long day never crossed his lips.

A better story about Goethe used to be told with much sympathetic unction by Emerson. A fanatical admirer once broke into the room of an inn where Goethe was undressing, and falling ecstatically at his feet, proceeded to pour forth his feelings in a set speech of adoration. The poet quietly put out the light and jumped into bed. Sir Walter Scott,

on the other hand, always treated with the utmost deference and courtesy the intrusive bores who used to overrun his house and lands—as many as sixteen parties are said to have visited Abbotsford in a single day—who pestered him with inquiries as to why he did not call his place Tullyveolan or Tillytudlem, who cross-examined him with open note-books in regard to his own age and that of his wife, and who shouted out "Prodigious!" in humorous imitation of Dominie Sampson at whatever was shown them. A more unpleasant nuisance, perhaps, which his fame brought upon him, was the extensive correspondence he had to carry on with admirers and literary tuft-hunters and would-be authors without number. And in those days of high postage a correspondence of this kind entailed not only worry and loss of time, but a serious waste of money as well. Scott's yearly bill for postage seldom came under £150. On one occasion a mighty package came by post from the United States, for which Scott had to pay five pounds. It contained a MS. play called *The Cherokee Lovers*, written by a young lady in New York, who begged Scott to read and correct it, write a prologue and an epilogue, have it placed upon the boards of Drury Lane, and negotiate with a publisher for the copyright. In less than a fortnight another package, equally large, charged with a similar postage, was

placed in Scott's hands, and, when opened, out popped another copy of *The Cherokee Lovers*, with a note stating that as the weather was stormy and uncertain the authoress had deemed it prudent to send a duplicate.

Perhaps our genial Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table could, if he would, tell many equally humorous tales of the naïve assurance of his correspondents. It is well known that every young poet thinks it necessary to send the Doctor a specimen of his poems, printed if he can, in MS. if he must, in order to obtain from him an opinion as to its literary value. And the letters from admirers, from autograph hunters, from the thousand varieties of bores with which this universe is infested, must be a trial to the patience of even this generous-hearted gentleman. Of course I do not mean to say that all the unknown correspondents of literary men are necessarily bores. Dr. Holmes, himself, has on record an emphatic protest against such a conclusion. "If you are pleased with any thing a writer says," he advises, "and doubt whether to tell him of it, do not hesitate: a pleasant word is a cordial to one who perhaps thinks he is tiring you, and so becomes tired himself." And he frankly acknowledges that he purrs very loud over a good, honest letter that says pretty things to him. "Certainly it is something to me," wrote Charlotte Brontë to a young man who had sent her,

though with many misgivings, an enthusiastic letter from Cambridge,—"certainly it is something to me that what I write should be acceptable to the feeling heart and refined intellect; undoubtedly it is much to me that my creations (such as they are) should find harborage, appreciation, indulgence, at any friendly hand, or from any generous heart. You are very welcome to take Jane, Caroline, and Shirley for your sisters, and I trust they will often speak to their adopted brother when he is solitary, and soothe him when he is sad. Your letter gave me pleasure, and I thank you for it."

But the majority of the correspondents who are attracted to a great name are not of this order; they write from a more selfish motive. Their object is to receive, and not to give: they want information, assistance, advice, or flattery.

Bayard Taylor used to complain very seriously of the various forms of annoyance which are thus entailed upon a literary man of note. "No man," he says, "thinks of calling upon a lawyer for advice, or a physician for examination and treatment, or a merchant for assistance in business, without rendering a full equivalent for the service; but one who devotes himself to literature, and barely succeeds in existing upon its scanty and uncertain returns, is expected to give his fullest professional aid at all times for the sake of the compliment implied by

asking it! Nay, more than this, the lawyer who writes a series of literary essays, the physician who produces a tragedy, the retired merchant who ponders an epic (such things frequently happen), feel no scruples in claiming two or three days of an author's time and thought, and would probably denounce him as a mercenary and unfitted for his high calling if he hinted at any payment for the technical improvements suggested. Literary reputation thus brings with it a burden which is rarely balanced by any worldly advantage. Tennyson declared, a few years after he had been appointed Poet-Laureate, that the salary of a little less than one hundred pounds which he received from the office did not really pay for the time lost in answering letters for aid and advice, and the postage upon them." Mr. Henry Ward Beecher, writing upon the passion for autograph hunting, says there "are forty million people in America, and quite a number more in Europe. Not less than one-quarter of them want autographs. They ask you for 'sentiments;' they beseech you for full letters. If you are an author, they solicit a manuscript. They invent errands, and write upon fictitious business, and ask remarkable questions,—all devices to extract a shy or reluctant autograph. There is but one remedy for this alarming literary intemperance. It is total abstinence."

No doubt Mr. Beecher would sympathize with the

frame of mind in which the great Irish agitator, after having been pestered with innumerable requests for his autograph, which he at first strove to comply with, finally, in a fit of disgust, perpetrated the following delightful bull:

*Dear Sir:* I'll be d—— if I will send you my autograph.

Yours,

DANIEL O'CONNELL.

Only a few months before Washington Irving's death, and while he felt the hand of the destroyer upon him, a stranger called and expressed so much anxiety to see him that Irving was moved to accede to his request. After a few commonplace remarks the stranger asked him for his autograph. Mr. Irving informed him that he was too distressed to write it then, but would send it to his address, which the stranger gave, and asked Irving his charge, saying, "It is a principle with me always to pay for such things." "It is a principle with me," replied Irving, sharply, "never to take pay." Recounting this incident at breakfast, one of his auditors was reminded of a story told by Longfellow. A person wrote the poet, wishing him to send an acrostic, the first letters of which should spell, "My Sweet Girl." "Write as if it were some beautiful girl with whom you were in love—

just as if it were for yourself;" and at the foot of the letter were these words, "Send bill."

But there are keener sufferings that must fall to the lot of a successful man of letters, in the shape of the social lionizing which, if he does not wish to make a hermit of himself, he must consent to undergo. Thackeray often complains very bitterly that he cannot leave his profession behind him when he goes into society. "My dear madam," he protests to an imaginary Mrs. Brown, "I have been making faces all day. It is my profession. I do my comic business with the greatest pains, seriousness, and trouble; and with it make, I hope, a not dishonest livelihood. If you ask Mr. Blondin to tea, you don't have a rope stretched from your garret window to the opposite side of the square, and request Monsieur to take his tea out on the centre of the rope?"

Harriet Martineau gives an account of the social miseries that are inflicted upon famous people in London drawing-rooms, which is at once amusing and painful. A new poet, she says, if he innocently accepts a promising invitation, is likely to find out afterward that his name has been inserted in the summonses to the rest of the company, or sent round from mouth to mouth to secure the rooms being full. If a woman who has written a successful play or novel attends the soirée of a "lionizing"

lady, she hears her name so announced on the stairs as to make it certain that the servants have had their instructions; she finds herself seized upon at the door by the hostess, and carried about to lord, lady, philosopher, gossip, and dandy, and being assured that she cannot be spared to each for more than ten seconds. A few instances of what may be seen in London during any one season, Miss Martineau thinks, would, if brought together, yield but a sorry exhibition of the manners of persons who give parties to gratify their own vanity, instead of enjoying the society and the pleasure of their friends. "In one crowded room are three lions—a new musical composer, an eminent divine who publishes, and a lady poet. These three stand in three corners of a room, faced by a gaping crowd. Weary at length of their position, they all happen to move toward the centre table at the same moment. They find it covered with the composer's music, the divine's sermons, and the lady's last new poem; they laugh in each other's faces, and go back to their corners. A gentleman from the top of Mont Blanc, or from the North Pole, is introduced to a lady who is dying to be able to say that she knows him, but who finds at the critical moment that she has nothing to say to him. In the midst of a triple circle of listeners she asks him whether he is not surprised at his own preservation; whether

it does not prove that Providence is everywhere, but more particularly in barren places? If a sigh or a syllable of remonstrance escapes from any victim, there is one phrase always at hand for use, a phrase which, if it ever contained any truth, or exerted any consolatory influence, has been long worn out and become mere words—'This is a tax you must pay for your eminence!'"

## CHAPTER X.

### SOME SUCCESSFUL BOOKS.

Books that have created a sensation—The Pickwick Papers—Childe Harold—The Waverley Novels—Macaulay's History—Evelina—Clarissa Harlowe—Atala—The Robbers—Werther—Uncle Tom's Cabin, etc.

AFTER all, though it may not be the highest, certainly the most intoxicating tribute which an author can receive is a great popular success—what the French call a mad success. That must have been a splendid moment in young Dickens' life, when, "Pickwick" in hand, he sprang at one leap into fame and fortune. To find his name a household word in every family, his works on every bookstall, and himself the most popular lion of the season, must have been glorious exhilaration to a man of such superabundant energy as seemed proof against the largest drafts of emotion. And that he did enjoy it to the full, as well as all further successes of the same kind, is amply evidenced in his correspondence. The pæans of victory, the hosannas of triumph, which he was continually shouting out

to John Forster and others of his intimates, came from a full heart which must either brag or burst.

Well. there was reason for exultation. For, as James Grant points out, not only was Dickens incomparably the most popular author of his day before he had attained his twenty-sixth year, but, what is even more extraordinary, he retained the distinction of being the most brilliant author of the age until the very hour of his death—a period of no less than thirty-five years. "The Pickwick Papers" started with an edition of 400 copies, and before half the numbers had appeared the publishers were sending out 40,000 copies of every issue. The work literally took the town by storm. The names of the famous club were in every one's mouth. High and low, rich and poor, all were reading the book and talking of it. Great physicians read it in their carriages between patient and patient, learned judges studied it on the bench while the jury were deliberating. Pickwick chintzes figured in linen-drapers' windows, and Weller corduroys in tailors' advertisements. Boz cabs might be seen rattling down the streets, and the portrait of the author was in every omnibus. Macaulay, over in India, pished and pshawed over the first number, and surrendered unconditionally to the riotous humor of the second. Jeffrey and Sydney Smith held out somewhat longer, but ended by making almost an idol out of the author.

Carlyle revelled in the work, and had his stories to tell about its popularity.

"An archdeacon," he wrote to Dickens, "with his own venerable lips, repeated to me, the other night, a strange profane story of a solemn clergyman who had been administering ghostly consolation to a sick person; having finished satisfactorily, as he thought, and got out of the room, he heard the sick person ejaculate, 'Well, thank God, Pickwick will be out in ten days anyway!' This is dreadful."

It is curious that both Dickens and Byron should have won their spurs at exactly the same age. Byron was twenty-six when he awoke one morning and found himself famous. The first edition of Childe Harold, Moore tells us, was disposed of instantly, and as the echoes of its reputation multiplied on all sides, the poem and the poet became the theme of every tongue. "At his door most of the leading names of the day presented themselves — some of them persons whom he had much wronged in his satire, but who now forgot their resentment in generous admiration. From morning till night the most flattering testimonies of his success crowded his table, from the grave tributes of the statesman and the philosopher down to (what flattered him still more) the romantic billet of some *incognita*, or the pressing note of invitation

from some fair leader of fashion; and in place of the desert which London had been to him but a few weeks before, he now not only saw the whole splendid interior of High Life thrown open to receive him, but found himself, among its illustrious crowds, the most distinguished object."

"Childe Harold" was published almost simultaneously with Scott's "Rokeby." The Waverley Novels have so completely overshadowed all the other achievements of Sir Walter, that we are apt to forget that long before he was known as a novelist, he was incomparably the most popular poet of his day. From the time "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" was given to the world, that world was at his feet. "Marmion" and "The Lady of the Lake" only increased his reputation, and in 1810, when the last of the three was published, he reigned supreme over a crowd of worshippers, fought for by publishers, adored by his audience, receiving the highest plaudits and the most solid rewards which poet up to that time had ever won. Two years later "Rokeby" came out,—just after the fiery vision of the "Childe" had burst upon the world. Yet even against such formidable competition, "Rokeby" for a period held its own. Lockhart, speaking from his own remembrance as a young student at Oxford, tells us that the booksellers' shops there were beleaguered for early copies. The fortunate possessor

of a copy was followed to his rooms by a tribe of friends, all as eager to hear it read as ever horse-jockeys were to see the conclusion of a match at Newmarket; and bets were freely offered (and as freely taken) that the elder favorite would keep his own ground against the rivalry of "Childe Harold." Scott, however, was too clear-sighted not to perceive that his reign was over, and "Waverley" was the result of this conviction. One more effort, indeed, he made with "The Lord of the Isles," published after the appearance of "Waverley;" but the reception of that poem decided him to stick to fiction. "Well, well, James, so be it," he said cheerily to his publisher, Ballantyne, when the latter reported a falling off in sales from the former poems; "but you know we must not droop, for we can't afford to give over. Since one line has failed we must just stick to something else." And he went on with the MS. of "Guy Mannering." It was a sensible decision. The Scotch novels created a greater sensation than the Scotch poems had done. Lord Byron himself was thrown into the shade by this mysterious Wizard of the North; and in the midst of the storm of applause and wonder, and contradictory reports and surmises, with which novel after novel was greeted, the author of all this commotion was leading the life of an ordinary country gentleman with means, and of kindly, hospitable

traits, feeling, he himself says, in regard to his new-found talent, very much like one who has come into possession of a hidden treasure, "none the less gratifying than if all the world knew it was his."

A more remarkable success than any we have yet mentioned was that of Macaulay's History, belonging, as it does, to a class of literature unlikely to create the enthusiasm of poetry or fiction. The first edition of 3000 was exhausted in five days. The second of the same number was out of print almost as soon as it appeared, and edition after edition was called for in rapid succession. In his most sanguine moments Macaulay had anticipated no such overwhelming popular success. "I hope all this will not make me a coxcomb," he notes in his journal; "I feel no intoxicating effect; but a man may be drunk without knowing it; on the whole I remember no success so complete, and I remember all Byron's poems and all Scott's novels." Seven years afterward, when the second part of the History (comprising volumes 3 and 4) was issued, the old tale of triumph was renewed. Encouraged by former results, the first edition had been fixed at twenty-five thousand copies. Macaulay was told that no such edition had ever been published of any work of the same bulk, yet the whole number was ordered in advance of publication. Nor was the success confined to the United Kingdom. "I have,"

writes the historian, "a most intoxicating letter from Everett. He says that no book has ever had such a sale in the United States, except (note the exception) the Bible and one or two school-books of universal authority." On the continent of Europe 10,000 copies of the pirated "Tauchnitz" edition were sold off in less than six months, and six rival translators were engaged at one and the same time in turning the book into German. Since then it has been translated into a dozen languages, and has sold to the extent of at least a million copies.

When Fanny Burney's "Evelina" was published, the book, Macaulay tells us, made little stir for some days. Its author was unknown, the house which issued it was not held in much esteem, and there was at that time a disposition among the most respectable people to condemn novels generally. "Soon, however, the first faint accents of praise began to be heard. The keepers of circulating libraries reported that everybody was asking for 'Evelina.' Then came a favorable notice in the *London Review*, and another still more favorable in the *Monthly*. And now the book found its way to tables which had seldom been polluted by marble-covered volumes. Scholars and statesmen, who contemptuously abandoned the crowd of romances to Miss Lydia Languish and Miss Suky Saunter, were not ashamed to own that they could not tear

themselves away from 'Evelina.' Fine carriages and rich liveries not often seen east of Temple Bar were attracted to the publisher's shop in Fleet street." The book was ascribed to various noted men of letters. Finally, however, the secret leaked out. And when it was found that a reserved, silent young woman had produced the best work of fiction that had appeared since the death of Smollett, the acclamations were redoubled. "The triumph was complete. The timid and obscure girl found herself on the highest pinnacle of fame. Great men, on whom she had gazed at a distance with humble reverence, addressed her with admiration, tempered by the tenderness due to her sex and age." And Macaulay thinks it matter for wonder that amidst all this adulation she preserved her heart and her head unspoiled.

Previous to "Evelina" the greatest success that had ever been attained by a work of fiction in England, greater even than in the case of any of Fielding's or Smollett's books, was that won by Richardson's "Clarissa Harlowe." The book originally appeared in eight volumes, issued at various intervals, and from the very first it was eagerly caught up and read by every one. The whole town was in an alternation of tears and exultation according as Clarissa's fortunes rose or fell. She and Lovelace were publicly talked of and discussed, their adventures were fol-

lowed with as breathless an interest as if they had been real characters. Numerous letters of expostulation were addressed to the author from his readers, complaining that he was harrowing up their feelings to an intolerably painful degree in a professed work of amusement. And after the fourth volume had come out, a report being spread around that the story would end tragically, these correspondents became still more restive, and conjured the author to reform Lovelace and marry him to Clarissa. Nay, one damsel went so far as to implore that even if the fascinating Lovelace were doomed, the author would "save his soul" and suffer him to die in the odor of sanctity, as if there had actually been a living sinner in the case, and his future fate had depended upon Richardson's decision.

Rousseau's "Dijon Discourse" made, according to Grimm, "a kind of revolution in Paris;" but the sale of that book was distanced out of sight by his later volumes. The "Nouvelle Héloïse" was out of print almost as fast as an edition was ready, and copies were loaned out for perusal at a charge of twelve sous per volume, only one hour being allowed for each volume. Rousseau himself tells a story which gives some idea of the enthusiasm with which the story was read. Madame de Talmont received a copy on the day she was going to a ball at the

Opera. After supper she dressed, and, waiting for the time for starting, took up this new romance. At midnight she ordered her horses to be put to the carriage, and went on reading. A servant brought word the carriage was ready, but received no reply. After a while came others of her household to tell her it was two o'clock. There was no hurry, she answered, and went on reading. The minutes fleeted by, her watch stopped, and she rang to ask the time. It was four in the morning. That being the case, it was too late to go to the ball, she said; let her horses go back to the stable. She undressed, and passed the rest of the night in reading on and on.

In the case of "Gulliver's Travels," the demand was so urgent that the price of the first edition was raised before the second could be printed. Of the "Encyclopédie," which was issued in twenty-two volumes folio, four thousand two hundred and fifty copies were printed in the first edition, and they went off so rapidly that within a few weeks not one remained on hand at the booksellers'. The last copies were eagerly caught up at the price of eighteen hundred livres.

Le Sage's "Diable Boiteux" had an immense run. The first edition was exhausted on the day of publication. Just as the penultimate copy was going off the counter, two customers—grand seigneurs, both of them—presented themselves.

"Messieurs," cried the bookseller, "I have but a single copy left!"

"Then it's mine!" cried one.

"No, mine!" exclaimed the other, "for I asked for it first."

"Perhaps you did, but then I was inside the shop when you were only just at the door."

"I have got hold of the copy and won't part with it, except in pieces."

"Messieurs," interposed the bookseller, "I can never allow a book like that to be torn to pieces."

"Well, the 'Diable Boiteux' is worth a sword-thrust or two; so, come on, and let us fight for it."

"Agreed, and he that gets the worst of it shall be too far gone to read the 'Diable Boiteux,' and the other may then carry it off whole."

So off they went to have out their fight on the Quai de la Tournelle. The only ascertained result of the combat was that it sealed the success of the book, and put more editions in request.

La Bruyère's "Caractères," which the publisher issued on a venture, and with many misgivings, sold so well as to secure a handsome marriage portion for that publisher's daughter. What the author received is not mentioned. Montesquieu himself is authority for the statement that the popularity of the "Lettres Persanes" was so great that book-sellers used to go about the streets catching every

one by the sleeve, and begging, "Prythee, write me some 'Persian Letters.'"

Chateaubriand, in his "Memoirs," dilates upon the expressive tokens of the popularity of his *Atala*,—such as his finding, even in the little wayside inns, colored engravings of the principal characters, who were also to be seen exhibited in wax, in little wooden boxes, on the quays, just as at fairs they exhibit images of the Virgin and the saints. He saw his female savage, with a head-dress of cock's feathers, at the theatre on the Boulevards. Parodies, burlesques, caricatures, assailed him, to his infinite glorification, on every side. All female Paris wept over the woes of "Atala." The author became the fashion. With becoming modesty he assures us that it would be impossible for him, becomingly, to tell how ladies crowded around him; how they fought for a single word in his handwriting; how they caught up envelopes which he had directed, and blushingly, with downcast eyes, hid them under the flowing veil of their long locks. These things he couldn't tell, so he lets us know all about them in this stage-whispering manner. His head, he acknowledges, was turned. He had never before experienced the joys of a gratified vanity, and he gave himself up to the intoxication as he would to a first love affair. Nevertheless, his new honors embarrassed him. He felt ashamed of

them, as something he was unworthy of. He slunk through the streets with his hat pressed down over his forehead, for fear that the great man would be recognized. He courted obscure restaurants, where, in some dark corner, he could pore over the papers containing his praises in solitary happiness. When Sa Supériorité ate his thirty-cent dinner, he swallowed it hastily, confused and ill at ease, because he fancied that every one was staring at him. He posed for himself; he wondered at himself; he said to himself, "Ah, it is you, is it, O extraordinary creature, who are eating here like any common mortal!" Such is his own picture of his condition of mind at this time, and he winds up by saying that if he wasn't spoiled by all this, it was because he had naturally a good heart.

The "Messiah" of Klopstock—Coleridge's very German Milton—was received on its first appearance in Germany with such tumultuous applause as reverberated to the utmost confines of Europe. Enthusiastic admirers likened the author to his own seraph Eloah. Men read the cantos with beating hearts and streaming eyes until, overcome with emotion, they were forced to lay them down and wait for a calmer moment to take them up again. Enthusiastic maidens wrote gushing letters to the author; poets and philosophers sent him invitations to visit them; King Frederick V. of Denmark set-

tled a pension of four hundred thalers upon him, in order that he might be enabled to devote himself entirely to literature. His reputation remained with him to the last. Every succeeding work was received with storms of rapture and applause, and when he died his remains were followed to the grave by such a train of distinguished citizens, amid such pomp and circumstance, as never before and never since greeted the funeral ceremony of any German citizen.

Carlyle tells us that the publication of Schiller's "Robbers" produced an extraordinary feeling in the literary world. Translations soon appeared in almost all the languages of Europe, and were read in all of them with a deep interest, compounded of admiration and aversion, according to the relative proportions of sensibility and judgment in the various minds which contemplated the subject. In Germany the enthusiasm which the "Robbers" excited was extreme. The young author had burst upon the world like a meteor, and surprise, for a time, suspended the power of cool and rational criticism. In the ferment produced by the universal discussion of this single topic, the poet was magnified above his natural dimensions, great as they were; and though the general sentence was loudly in his favor, yet he found detractors as well as praisers, and both equally beyond the limits of

moderation. "If Germany is ever to have a Shakespeare, here he is!" shouted one fanatical admirer. "If I might create a world," shouted back an equally fanatical opponent, "on the condition that the 'Robbers' should appear in that world, I would not create it!"

Only a few years previous, an even greater excitement had attended the production of "The Sorrows of Werther." The effect of this work was indeed prodigious. Goethe himself compares it to the explosion of a large mine by a spark. That turbulent unrest which, throughout Europe, preceded the period of the French Revolution, for the first time in Germany found literary expression. It was no private grief that had here been voiced; it was rather a shriek of agony from the heart of a nation, for which Goethe was merely the mouth-piece. All classes, all conditions, accepted Werther as a type of their own wild longings, and struggles, and aspirations. Pilgrimages were made to the supposed site of Werther's grave; his blue coat and knee-breeches became the national attire; some young enthusiasts carried their emulation so far as to commit suicide because he had done so. Other nations, also, felt the shock. The book was translated into every European language. It penetrated into China and Japan. To this day, perhaps, it remains the most widely known of all of Goethe's

works, although it is far, very far, from being his best.

But it is America that, in showman phrase, has produced the "monster" success of all times. The sensation which attended the publication of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" throws into the shade any other sensation of the kind. Ten thousand copies of the book were sold in a few days, and over 300,000 within the year. These are the American figures. Over in England the sales were still more prodigious. There being no restraining copyright, forty-three different editions were put upon the market by rival houses, and the combined sales have been estimated at over two million copies. One house alone turned out ten thousand copies daily for the space of four weeks, and had to employ a thousand hands in preparing copies for the general demand. Nor was that all. In the form of translations Uncle Tom ran like wildfire all over Europe, and even beyond the borders of Europe. It made its appearance in no less than twenty-one different languages, and in several countries there were as many as a dozen different versions. Macaulay wrote to the author not many months after the issue of the work, that in Italy he found her fame eclipsing that of all other writers, and that "there was no place where Uncle Tom—transformed into 'Il Zio Tom'—was not to be found."

James Parton's account of the enthusiasm which greeted the book is worth quoting.

"That book, we may almost say, went into every household in the civilized world, which contained one person capable of reading it. And it was not an essay; it was a vivid exhibition; it was not read from a sense of duty, nor from a desire to get knowledge; it was read with passion; it was devoured; people sat up all night reading it; those who could read read it to those who could not; and hundreds of thousands who never would have read it saw it played upon the stage. Who shall presume to say how many soldiers that book added to the Union army? Who shall estimate its influence in hastening emancipation in Brazil, and in preparing the amiable Cubans for a similar measure? Both in Cuba and Brazil the work has been read with the most passionate interest. But if it is impossible to measure the political effect of this work, we may at least assert that it gave a thrilling pleasure to ten millions of human beings—an innocent pleasure too, and one of many hours' duration."

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE SEAMY SIDE OF LETTERS.

Famous works that were at first unsuccessful—Trials and struggles of unknown authors—Hawthorne, Thoreau, Carlyle, Landor, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and others — Writers rescued from obscurity by their poorer works — Poets and verse-makers—The power of ridicule—Bayard Taylor and the neglected geniuses of America.

IN literary matters, as in other things, the rule is for merit to succeed. But the rule is none the less subject to those proverbial exceptions by which *all* rules are said to be proved. It is not every great book that has run into twenty editions or has lifted its author at one bound into fame. Of course it may be urged there are other tests of success than the bookseller's ledger or the plaudits of the crowd, and that literary history yields few instances of the absolute failure of any book of merit to win for itself from the start the approbation of that "audience fit though few," which was all that Milton desired. But as in the last chapters some instances of sudden and overwhelming popularity have been given, so in this it is my purpose

to present the other side of the picture, and to cite some examples of how a recognized literary position has been won only as the fruit of long struggle and waiting.

In his prefaces and in his Note-books Hawthorne often speaks, in no complaining or querulous mood, but with a kindly and engaging frankness, of that long lane to which he found no turning until full two-thirds of his life had passed. "The author of 'Twice-told Tales,'" he tells us, "has a claim to one distinction, which, as none of his literary brethren will care about disputing it with him, he need not be afraid to mention. He was, for a good many years, the obscurest man of letters in America." "Was there ever," he asks in another book, "such a weary delay in obtaining the slightest recognition from the public, as in my case? I sat down by the wayside of life, like a man under enchantment, and a shrubbery sprung up around me, and the bushes grew to be saplings, and the saplings became trees, until no exit appeared possible through the entangling depths of my obscurity." Perhaps there is a little exaggeration here. It should be remembered, as Mr. Henry James urges, that prior to the publication of the "Scarlet Letter" Hawthorne had not appealed to the world with any great energy. The "Twice-told Tales," charming as they are, do not constitute a very massive literary pedestal. As

soon as the author, resorting to severer measures, put forth the "Scarlet Letter," the public ear was touched and charmed, and after that it was held to the end. Nor were the "Twice-told Tales" absolutely neglected. Even before they were gathered into book form they attracted a great deal of attention both at home and abroad. "In this dismal chamber FAME was won," writes Hawthorne in 1836, before the publication of the "Tales" in book form. To be sure, the volume met with a limited sale, but it received a remarkable unanimity of praise from all the authoritative organs of literary opinion, and it confirmed and extended his reputation.

Here is a very delicate and beautiful passage written in his Note-books in 1840, only a short time after the publication of the "Twice-told Tales," in which he speaks of his literary position as of something already assured:

Here I sit, in my old, accustomed chamber, where I used to sit in days gone by. Here I have written many tales,—many that have been burned to ashes, many that doubtless deserved the same fate. This claims to be called a haunted chamber, for thousands upon thousands of visions have appeared to me in it; and some few of them have become visible to the world. If ever I should have a biographer, he ought to make great mention of this chamber in my memoirs, because so much of my

lonely youth was wasted here, and here my mind and character were formed, and here I have been glad and hopeful, and here I have been despondent. And here I sat a long, long time, waiting patiently for the world to know me, and sometimes wondering why it did not know me sooner, or whether it would ever know me at all,—at least, till I were in my grave. And sometimes it seemed as if I were already in the grave, with only life enough to be chilled and benumbed. But oftener I was happy, —at least, as happy as I then knew how to be, or was aware of the possibility of being. By and by the world found me out in my lonely chamber, and called me forth, —not indeed with a loud roar of acclamation, but rather with a still, small voice ; and forth I went, but found nothing in the world that I thought preferable to my old solitude till now. And now I begin to understand why I was imprisoned so many years in this lonely chamber, and why I could never break through the viewless bolts and bars ; for if I had sooner made my escape into the world, I should have grown hard and rough, and been covered with earthly dust, and my heart might have become callous by rude encounters with the multitude. But living in solitude till the fulness of time was come, I still kept the dew of my youth and the freshness of my heart.

There was one, at least, of Hawthorne's contemporaries, and of a genius as rare and delicate as his own, who might well have disputed with him his claim of being the obscurest man of letters in America. Henry David Thoreau found it still

more difficult to reach the public ear. He published his "Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers" in 1849. The edition was 1000 copies. Some years after, when the sale had stopped, his publisher, who had been writing from time to time, for one or two years past, to know what he should do with the copies still on hand, at last suggested that he had use for the room they occupied in his cellar. "So I had them all sent to me here," said the author in a letter, "and they have arrived to-day by express, piling the man's wagon,—706 copies out of an edition of 1000, which I bought of Monroe four years ago, and have ever since been paying for, and have not quite paid for yet." He is glad of a chance to examine his purchase, and finds the volumes are something more substantial than fame, as his back knows, which has borne them up two flights of stairs to "a place similar to that to which they trace their origin." Of the remaining 294 copies, 75 were given away, leaving the actual sales 219 copies. "I have now a library of nearly 900 volumes," he says, consoling himself, "over 700 of which I wrote myself. Is it not well that the author should behold the fruits of his labor?" In spite of this he takes up his pen that night with as much satisfaction as ever, and believes this result is more inspiring and better than if a thousand had bought his wares, since it affects his privacy less and leaves him freer.

Across the water, in England, two men of greater gifts than Hawthorne emerged from obscurity at about the same time he did, after quite as wearisome an apprenticeship. Like him, too, both Thomas Carlyle and William Makepeace Thackeray had been known to the inner circles of men of letters, had been valued contributors to the periodical press for long years before their names became public property. "Full many a valuable truth," says an old article in the *Quarterly Review*, "has been sent undulating through the air by men who have lived and died unknown. At this moment the rising generation are supplied with the best of their mental aliment by writers whose names are a dead letter to the mass." The article was written apropos of Thackeray, whose "Vanity Fair" had just made its appearance. He was then thirty-seven, and had published several books. Most of them had been failures; none had achieved for him any general reputation. But with the publication of "Vanity Fair" he became a famous man, and every scrap of writing from his pen was eagerly sought after. The old books were resuscitated, and ran into edition after edition. New books were made out of articles that had had a long sleep of oblivion in the magazines, and "Michel Angelo Titmarsh," "George Fitzboodle"—the various alter egos under which Thackeray had contributed to the press—became names of historical interest in literature.

Carlyle's "Reminiscences" have familiarized the public with the details of his long struggle with obscurity. His "Sartor Resartus," that great book whose influence has effected a revolution in the lives of many across whose pathway it has lain, was at first neglected or derided except by a select few. There is a deep pathos in the description which he himself has given of the gloom that had settled down upon him after the apparent failure of this book. When he published his "French Revolution," nothing, he says, could raise his spirits out of utter grimness and fixed contemptuous disbelief in the future.

Hope of having succeeded, of ever succeeding, I had not the faintest, was not even at the pains to wish it; said only, in a dim, mute way, "Very well, then; be it just so, then!" A foolish young neighbor, not an ill-disposed, sent me a number of the "Athenæum" (literary journal of the day), in which I was placidly, with some elaboration, set down as blockhead and strenuous failure: the last words were, "Readers, have we made out our case?" I read it without pain, or pain the least to signify; laid it aside for a day or two; then one morning, in some strait about our breakfast tea-kettle, slipt the peccant number under that, and had my cup of excellent hot tea from it. Thackeray's laudation in the "Times," I also recollect the arrival of. But neither did Thackeray inspire me with any emotion, still less with any ray of exultation. "One other poor judge voting,"

I said to myself; "but what is he, or such as he? The fate of that thing is fixed! I have written it; that is all my result." Nothing now strikes me as affecting in all this but her noble attempt to cheer me on my return home to her, still sick and sad; and how she poured out on me her melodious joy, and all her bits of confirmatory anecdotes and narratives. "Oh, it has had a great success, dear!" and not even she could irradiate my darkness, beautifully as she tried for a long time, as I sat at her feet again by our own parlor fire. "Oh, you are an unbelieving nature!" said she at last, starting up probably to give me some tea.

And yet his wife was right. In every sense except the publisher's sense, the book *was* a great success. Its sale was not at first large, it did not for many years bring in any money,—and money was much needed in the Carlyle household,—but it established the author's fame on a broad and solid basis.

"There have been cases," says De Quincey, in an article on Walter Savage Landor, "and one or two in modern times, where an author could point to a vast array of his own works, concerning which no evidence existed that so much as one had been opened by human hand, or glanced at by human eye. That was awful, such a sleep of pages by thousands in one eternal darkness, never to be visited by light; such a rare immunity from the

villanies of misconstruction; such a Sabbath from the impertinencies of critics! You shuddered to reflect that for any thing known to the contrary *there* might lurk jewels of truth explored in vain, or treasure forever intercepted to the interests of man," and he humorously speculates whether a man might not build a reputation on the basis of not being read. To be read, he argues, is undoubtedly something; to be read by an odd million or so is a sort of feather in a man's cap. Such an exalted station, he says, had almost been reached by Walter Savage Landor, whose first work, "Gebir," had the sublime distinction, for some time, of having enjoyed only two readers, viz.: Robert Southey and Thomas De Quincey. It was on first entering Oxford that the latter found "Gebir" printed and (nominally) published; whereas, in fact, all its advertisements of birth and continued existence were but so many notifications of its intense privacy. Not knowing Southey at that time, the Opium-eater vainly conceited himself to be the one sole purchaser and reader of this poem. He even fancied himself to have been pointed out in the streets of Oxford, where the Landors had once been well known, as the one inexplicable man authentically known to possess "Gebir," or even, it might be whispered mysteriously, to have read "Gebir." It was not clear but this reputation

might stand in lieu of any independent fame, and might raise him to literary distinction. And so, when, five years afterward, he found he had a brother near the throne, in the person of Southey, mortification would have led him to resign willingly in his favor.

Later on in life, continues De Quincey, Landor forfeited his sublime distinction, as it could be proved against some of his prose writings that they had been read by at least a score of readers.

In his "Literary Reminiscences" the same author has described the cloud of obscurity which for many years after they had commenced writing shrouded the names of Wordsworth and Coleridge.

No man, [he says, and he is speaking of the year 1805,] beyond one or two in each ten thousand, had so much as heard of either Coleridge or Wordsworth; and that one, or those two, knew them only to scorn them—trample on them—spit upon them: men so abject in public estimation, I maintain, as that Coleridge and that Wordsworth, had not existed before—have not existed since—will not exist again. We have heard, in old times, of donkeys insulting effete or dying lions, by kicking them; but, in the case of Coleridge and Wordsworth, it was effete donkeys that kicked living lions. They, Coleridge and Wordsworth, were the Pariahs of literature in those days: as much scorned wherever they were known; but escaping that scorn only because they were as little known as Pariahs, and even more obscure.

Let us run over hastily a few of the more notorious cases of authors who have suffered from the public neglect, confining ourselves, however, to the men of this century. Willis, breakfasting at the Temple with a friend, met Charles and Mary Lamb. He mentioned having bought a copy of Elia's "Essays" the last day he was in America as a parting gift for one of the loveliest and most gifted ladies in the country. "What did you give for it?" said Lamb. "About seven and sixpence." "Permit me to pay you that," and with the utmost gravity Lamb counted out the money upon the table. "I never yet," he explained, "wrote any thing that would sell. I am the publisher's ruin." (It was Lamb, by the way, was it not, who introduced Crabb Robinson to Wordsworth as his one admirer?) Shelley's writings during his lifetime brought him in no profit, their sale never exceeding a few hundred copies. Goethe complained that his works were an expense to him, though all Europe rang with his name, and though "the Chinese with trembling fingers traced upon porcelain the loves of Werther and of Charlotte." Most of Robert Browning's books have been brought out at his own cost, and it is only of late that they have begun to pay back expenses. Neither Godwin nor Henry Taylor could ever have subsisted upon the profits derived from authorship. Sheridan Knowles,

Robert Burns, and Thomas Campbell had a hand-to-hand conflict with poverty nearly all their lives. Richard Realf, one of the truest and finest poets that this country has produced, lived and died in comparative obscurity and in indigent circumstances. Hood, on his death-bed, jestingly complained that though his friends might be able "to *urn a lively Hood*" after his death, he could not do it while living. Southey's "Madoc," upon which he had built his hopes of renown as a poet, was coldly received, and the disappointment caused him to suspend his labor on "Kehama," which he had begun. He complained that an author might be contented with posthumous fame, but not with posthumous bread and cheese. His friend Landor, however, making him a liberal promise of financial aid, he rose unusually early the next morning and went on with "Kehama." But for this munificent assistance his career as a poet might have ended with "Madoc."

Rogers, the banker-poet, once said to Wordsworth, "If you would let me edit your poems, and give me leave to omit some half-dozen, and make a few trifling alterations, I would engage that you should be as popular a poet as any living." One can imagine the magnificent scorn with which Wordsworth must have greeted the proposition.

A good many authors have achieved sudden popularity through their poorer performances. In

speaking of Hawthorne, it might have been mentioned that the first piece from his pen which was widely copied by the press was "A Rill from the Town-pump,"—by no means one of his best. Henry James, Jr., had written "The American," and the charming stories collected in the volume entitled "A Passionate Pilgrim," he was known to a few scattered thousands as a writer of lasting qualities, but he did not become a public character until the appearance of "Daisy Miller," a delightful little sketch, to be sure, but not so unmistakably a work of genius as, for instance, his "Madonna of the Future." Bret Harte, although he had already written and collected into book-form some of his very best work,—"The Luck of Roaring Camp," "The Condensed Novels," etc.,—was practically unknown until his six stanzas on the "Heathen Chinee" came out. He then jumped at once into popularity, and his books must have felt considerable surprise at being rudely awakened from a long sleep upon his publisher's shelves to be hurried out into a world that was eagerly clamoring for them. Prosper Mérimée's masterpiece, "Colomba," originally fell almost dead from the press, to be revived a few years later by the fame which its author had just gained by a short story—not one of his best—entitled "Mateo Falcone." Mallock's "New Republic," one of the most remarkable satires of this cen-

tury, was little known until his (far inferior) sketch of "The New Paul and Virginia" made him famous. Then the general public, for the first time, heard of the former book, and were astonished at their own neglect of it. It has been mentioned that Carlyle's fame was established by the "French Revolution"; but it was the Edinburgh address upon "The Choice of Books" which first made him a popular author. In his "Reminiscences" Carlyle alludes, ungraciously enough, to this fact as a new proof of the singularly dark and feeble condition of public judgment at the time. "No idea," he says, "or shadow of an idea, is in that address but what had been set forth by me tens of times before, and the poor gaping sea of Prurient Blockheadism receives it as a kind of inspired revelation, and runs to buy my books (it is said) now when I have got quite done with their buying or refusing to buy. If they would give me £10,000 a year, and bray unanimously their hosannas heaven-high for the rest of my life, who now would there be to get the smallest joy or profit from it?" Browning, to this day, is known to the multitude by his poorer and less characteristic performances,—by the "Pied Piper of Hamelin," rather than by the "Blot on the Scutcheon."

The public is rarely sanguine about beginners in verse, and the main reason is that there are so many of them. Nearly all young people whose tastes run

into literature at all, experience certain musical sensations that are related to poetry as a boy's fancy for a pretty face is related to love. But very few young people are gifted with that faculty of impersonal judgment which would enable them to distinguish in their own case between the counterfeit and the reality. And the consequence is that editors and publishers are overrun, to an extent of which outsiders can form only a slight conception, by young gentlemen and young ladies who fancy themselves embryo Byrons and unrecognized Barretts. The exigencies of life, the necessity of earning a subsistence, luckily for themselves, force many of these people into other vocations before their characters have been formed and while they can still yield to the plastic touch of circumstance. But if they have any money at their command it is safe to presume that they have first issued a volume of verse, printed at their own expense, of course, in which they have collected together the masterpieces that have been rejected by undiscerning editors. There is something really pathetic (and yet it has its dash of comedy too) in the acute contrast between the vivid hope with which these frail barks are launched and the reception that is accorded them. The worst novels that can possibly be conceived of are sure of selling at least a couple of hundred copies, and of receiving a certain amount of notice,

laudatory or otherwise, from the press. But a book of poems is published—its author and his female relatives are in a ferment of excitement—its title and the name of the poet are mentioned in an obscure corner of a few papers, with perhaps a word or two of editorial comment by a man who has probably never read beyond the title-page, and when the half-yearly statement comes in, the author finds that the forty or fifty copies disposed of to his own friends constitute the bulk of the sale. The general public has never even heard of the book! Nay, so perfectly has the secret been kept that even his next-door neighbor, who makes it a point to acquaint himself with what he eats for dinner, who somehow finds out when he last paid his tailor, never learns of the existence of the book, unless the poet chooses to tell him of it. With little exaggeration I believe something like this to be the history of ninety-nine and a big fraction out of every one hundred books of verse that are issued.

And yet, this first barrier of indifference crossed, there is nothing which is so certain of finding its level as genuine poetry. And it takes so little (so little, that is, in quantity) to constitute a poetical reputation. A few stanzas contributed to a magazine or quoted in a review and circulated through the press have sufficed to make many men famous. Mr. Bourdillon was an undergraduate, still in his

teens, when the eight lines beginning "The night hath a thousand eyes" (and very lovely lines they are,—it is a pity that he has done nothing so good since),—when these eight lines made him known to two continents. Mr. Charles M. Dickinson's "The Children," Mrs. Alexander's "Burial of Moses," Alfred Domett's "Christmas Hymn" (to mention only the most recent instances), have secured them a place in every anthology of poetry.

It is not strange, therefore, that the very ridicule which has been meant to hurt some poets has really rescued them from obscurity. It served as an announcement of their existence to those who were capable of appreciating them and who otherwise might never have heard of them. As I write, a paragraph is going the rounds of the press that Mr. Oscar Wilde's poems have reached a second edition, which means that they have been read by some fifteen or twenty thousand people. Now if there be any real merit in the gentleman's verse some of that number will be sure to find it out. They probably would not have heard of him, would not have seen his book, but for the ridicule of Du Maurier and *Punch*. Gifford's savage criticism on Keats really helped to make him immortal. Tennyson's first two books were almost entirely ignored by the press —not quite undeservedly either, for they contain little of value except the poem of "Mariana"—and

few people heard of them. But his third volume was a good deal laughed at, and Tennyson became a famous man before he was twenty-five. Walt Whitman has been absolutely scoffed into eminence. The effete donkeys whom De Quincey speaks of as kicking the living lions, Wordsworth and Coleridge, were really helping them into fame, and did succeed in hastening the final and inevitable verdict. If we wish to find a specimen of a thoroughly neglected genius we must agree in Swinburne's estimate of Charles F. Wells as "one only lesser than the greatest of his times in some of the greatest qualities of his art"—and to *his* work the critics, according to the same authority, "could not spare even such notice as they had accorded to that of Keats; not an owl thought it worth while to stretch his throat, not an ass to lift up his heel against the workman. So the books vanished at once, and now only by such happy chance as sometimes may come to the help of assiduous research can they be dug up from the cemeteries of literature."

Nevertheless, whether we agree with Swinburne or not, and even though we allow the existence of exceptions, we must end, as we began, with the general proposition that merit in these days is bound to succeed. Culture and intelligence are spreading through the masses and giving an ever-

widening audience to the man who has something to say. The means of communication between author and audience are easier of access than even a generation ago, and have immensely increased. The Chattertons, the Otways, and the Savages of the past will not be likely to appear again in the future. Johnson eating his dinner behind the screen in Cave's parlor because he was too seedy to be presented at a tradesman's table, Goldsmith pursued by duns and bailiffs, Camoens perishing in a hospital from the effects of starvation, Corneille on his death-bed without money enough to purchase a little broth to sustain his vitality, the Grub Street poor devil author out at elbows and redolent of gin, —we may be thankful that these scenes and these incidents have passed out of literature.

"John Howard Payne," says Bayard Taylor, "once read to us—and it was something of an infliction—a long MS. on the 'Neglected Geniuses of America,' a work which only death, we suspect, prevented him from giving to the world. There was not one name in the list which had ever before reached our ears. Nicholas Blauvelt and William Phillips and a number of other utterly forgotten rhymesters were described and eulogized at length, the quoted specimens of their poetry proving all the while their admirable right to the oblivion which Mr. Payne deprecated. Our inference then

was, and still is, that unacknowledged (or at least unmanifested) genius is no genius at all, and that the lack of sympathy which many young authors so bitterly lament is a necessary test of their fitness for their assumed vocation."

## CHAPTER XII.

### LITERARY SOCIETY.

Genial illusions in regard to authors—Literary idols and the enchantment lent by distance—Thackeray and others on the dulness of literary society—De Quincey's explanation—The subject considered.

THERE is a certain halo of romance about a successful man of letters. There is a genial illusion among the inexperienced that an author must, in his own person, represent those qualities which they admire in his works—that a poet's appearance and conversation should be redolent of that graceful melancholy which is supposed to befit a dweller in the empyrean, that wits should be always witty, and orators fiery and eloquent. It is a pity that these ideals so rarely survive the rude presence of facts. Lord Byron said that he never liked to see the woman he loved engaged in eating. And so it is something of a shock to a hero worshipper to hear his favorite poet, whom he has met in society for the first time, discourse upon the weather or his wife's rheumatism, to find his bril-

liant satirist a very ordinary young man with red hair and sleepy eyes, or his impassioned orator in private life one of the dullest of dullards. We all remember Francis Jeffrey's meeting with Talleyrand. At his own particular request he was placed by the statesman's side at the dinner-table. It was a proud moment, and one from which he had hoped to bear memories which would never die. The one remark that Talleyrand let fall was, "Apropos of your cock-a-leekie soup, Monsieur Jeffreys, do you take it with prunes or without prunes?"

It is in view of this almost certain disenchantment that the Country Parson, with his usual homely good sense, advises young enthusiasts to avoid the near approach to their idols. "Let us leave Yarrow unvisited; our sweet ideal is fairer than the fairest fact. No hero is a hero to his valet, and it may be questioned whether any clergyman is a saint to his beadle. Yet the hero may be a true hero, and the clergyman a very excellent man, but no human being can bear too close inspection. I remember hearing a clever and enthusiastic lady complain of what she had suffered on meeting a certain great bishop at dinner. No doubt he was dignified, pleasant, clever; but the mysterious halo was no longer round his head. Here is a sad circumstance in the lot of a very eminent man: I mean such a man as Mr. Tennyson or Professor Longfellow. As an ele-

phant walks through a field, crushing the crop at every step, so do these men advance through life smashing, every time they dine out, the enthusiastic fancies of several young people."

When Jean Paul, the "wild forest man," went down to Weimar, in the first flush of his autorial fame, to meet face to face with the literary gods whom he had worshipped from afar, he writes back his impressions in an exultant vein of boyish exuberance to his "beloved brother Otho." He has met Madame de Kalb, who "possesses two great things—great eyes such as I never saw before, and a great soul." He has met Herder, "who looks as noble, but not yet exactly, as I thought, but speaks as he writes." He is going next day to see Goethe and Schiller. He speaks of his "joy-intoxicated life," of having lived twenty years in a few days, of the honors which the great have paid him. And yet he cries out at the close of his letter, "The bitterest drop, Otho, swims in my cup of joy. What Jean Paul wins humanity loses in his eyes. Oh, my ideal of great men! All my acquaintance with great men only increases the value of my beloved brother Otho." After seeing Goethe and Schiller, he writes, "I have thrown away my foolish preferences in favor of great authors. They are like other people. Here every one knows that they are like the earth, that looks from a distance—from heaven—like a

shining moon, but when the foot is upon it is found to be made of *boue de Paris*. Henceforth I shall never bow down in reverence to the *great*, but only to the *good*."

In a similar strain Mrs. Hannah More, after her first season among the big-wigs of London, writes back to her family: "For my own part, the more I see of the 'honored, famed, and great,' the more I see of the littleness, the unsatisfactoriness of all created good." In another place she says she has remarked that "wits, when they get into a cluster, are just as dull as other people." Mme. de Staël laughingly reproved her daughter when she acknowledged that she was afraid of literary wits in society. "Ah, if you only knew how small they look when you get close to them, and how ill at ease and awkward they are." Bayle, who had started as a sort of literary-hero worshipper, after a very slight experience, found out the clayey composition of his idols. In one of his letters he avers that when once you have come to know personally a good number of celebrated writers you find out that it is no such great matter after all to have composed a book and a good one at that. "The literary men, I acknowledge, excite my reverence the least," writes Francis Jeffrey to his family in a letter describing his first visit to London. "Authors," says Miss Mitford, "as a general rule are the most disappointing people

in the world," and she quotes approvingly from her old bookseller, George Whitaker, that "booksellers, next to authors, were the most stupid and ignorant persons under the sun." Before going into literary society she had expected that its sins would be rather on the side of superciliousness or haughtiness. She found, on the contrary, that most writers were mere good-humored chatterers, neither very wise nor very witty, but nine times out of ten unaffected and pleasant, and quite removing by their conversation any awe that might have been excited by their works.

From the standpoint of thorough disillusion Thackeray, in one of his books, looks back with a touch of humorous melancholy to the time "when to know Thompson, who had written a magazine article, was an honor and a privilege; and to see Brown, the author of the last romance, in the flesh, and actually walking in the park with his umbrella and Mrs. Brown, was an event remarkable, and to the end of life to be perfectly well remembered." There is no theme upon which Thackeray harps more constantly than that of

> How very weak the very wise are,
> How very small the very great are.

"A fiddlestick about men of genius!" he makes his George Warrington cry when Pendennis is in-

dulging in some young man's nonsense upon the subject. "There are thousands of clever fellows who could, if they would, turn verses, write articles, read books and deliver judgment upon them; the talk of professional critics and writers is not a whit more brilliant, or profound, or amusing, than that of any other set of educated people." And after that famous dinner at Mr. Bungay's, the publisher, where Pen has for the first time been introduced into literary society, Warrington asks: "And now that you have seen the men of letters, tell me was I far wrong in saying that there are thousands of people in this town who don't write books, who are to the full as clever and intellectual as the people that do?" And Pen, says the author, was forced to confess that the literary personages with whom he had become acquainted had not said much, in the course of the night's conversation, that was worthy to be remembered or quoted. "In fact, not one word about literature had been said during the whole course of the night; and it may be whispered to those uninitiated people who are anxious to know the habits and make the acquaintance of men of letters, that there are no race of men who talk about books, or perhaps, who read books, so little as literary men."

In a letter to a distinguished literary friend, Southey congratulates himself upon his complete removal from what is called literary society, which

he characterizes as "about the worst society in the world." Literary parties, he says, are his abomination. When he first made the acquaintance of Charlotte Smith, he rejoices to find her "more humanized, more akin to common feelings than most literary women. She is not looking out for admiration and talking to show off. I see in her none of the nasty little envies and jealousies common enough among the cattle." Macaulay does not seem to have liked the cattle any better. "I met Sir Bulwer Lytton," he notes in his Journal. "He is anxious about some scheme for some association of literary men. I detest all such associations. I hate the notion of gregarious authors. The less we have to do with each other the better."

"In general," says Byron, "I do not draw well with literary men; not that I dislike them, but I do not know what to say to them after I have praised their last publication," and his Journal has numerous entries like the following: "To-night there is a party of *purple* at the blue Miss * * * Shall I go? Um! I do not affect your blue-bottles; but one ought to be civil." Or like this: "Read the Quarrels of Authors. They seem to be an irritable set, and I wish myself well out of it. I 'll not march through Coventry with them, that 's flat. What the devil had I to do with scribbling? It 's too late to inquire, and all regret is useless."

But he affirms that if ever he has a son he will bring him up in the most anti-poetical way—"make him a lawyer or pirate or—any thing," and if in spite of all precautions he takes to writing, "then I shall be sure he 's none of mine, and cut him off with a bank token."

Sir Walter Scott could never endure, either in London or Edinburgh, the little exclusive circles of literary society, much less their occasional fastidiousness and petty partialities. He often complained of the real dulness of parties where each guest arrived under the implied and tacit obligation of exhibiting some extraordinary powers of talk or wit. "If," he said, "I encounter men of the world, men of business, odd or striking characters of professional excellence in any department, I am in my element, for they cannot lionize me without my returning the compliment and learning something from them. But as to a tableful of essayists and reviewers, or an evening with bards and blues, give me a crack with Tom Purdie in preference to that, a thousand times over!"

De Quincey speaks very frequently of the vapid and uninteresting nature of literary society, and he has been at some pains to find philosophical reasons for the phenomenon. "The literary class," he says, "one and all—unless by accident people of unusual originality, power, and also nerve, so as to be able

without trepidation to face the expectations of men—labor under two opposite disqualifications for a good tone of conversation. From causes visibly explained, they are either spoiled by the vices of reserve, and of over-consciousness directed upon themselves—this is one extreme; or, where manliness of mind has prevented this, beyond others of equal or inferior natural power, they are apt to be desperately commonplace. The first defect is an accident arising out of the rarity of literary pretensions, and would rapidly subside as the proportion became larger of practising literati to the mass of educated people. But the other is an adjunct scarcely separable from the ordinary prosecution of a literary career, and growing in fact out of literature *per se*, as literature is generally understood. That same day, says Homer, which makes a man a slave, robs him of half his value. That same hour which first awakens a child to the consciousness of being observed and to the sense of admiration, strips it of its freedom and unpremeditated graces of motion. Awkwardness at the least—and too probably, as a consequence of *that*, affectation and conceit follow hard upon the consciousness of special notice or admiration. The very attempt to disguise embarrassment too often issues in a secondary and more marked embarrassment." Another explanation he gives of the conversa-

tional inferiority of authors has been endorsed by Disraeli, namely, that they hoard up their best thoughts for the publishers. Cordiality of communication or ardor of dispute might betray them into a revelation of those golden thoughts which they intend to turn into books or articles. It was on this principle of deliberate social reserve that Adam Smith is said to have governed his conversation—he put a bridle on his words lest by accident a pearl should drop out of his lips among the vigilant bystanders. Again, it has been suggested that a writer who has exhausted himself in his books cannot be expected to be equally brilliant in company. He has been roused to an intense pitch of excitement while in the act of composition, and he is correspondingly nerveless and relaxed in his social hours. The electrical eel cannot always be giving off shocks; the bow that has long been strung loses its elasticity; the bird that soars to the stars must sometimes rest its wing on the earth. The proverbial shyness of scholars and students also may serve as a hamper to the tongues of many that can wield an efficient pen. Or, finally, the disappointment that worshippers of genius experience in the actual presence of genius may be merely the natural revulsion of their own overwrought fancies. There are young people who would find something wanting in an archangel could they meet with one, simply

because they would have expected something more than an archangel. If you worship an idol, and find that idol to be made of the inevitable clay, in the first moment of your disappointment you will not be inclined to allow that the clay at least is of a very superior quality. A work of art is, after all, the visible and appreciable embodiment of just so much light and love, of so much heart and mind, as the artist possesses, and these qualities, one would say, must be patent in the artist as well as in the work, —patent, at least, to one who has cultivated a masculine sobriety of judgment, who understands the due relation of things in this world, and is content to look for a man and not for a demigod.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE CONSOLATIONS OF LITERATURE.

Pleasures of the creative imagination—Literary labors a solace in affliction—Irving, Cowper, Tennyson, George Eliot, Hawthorne, Southey, and others quoted—Macaulay's letter on the superiority of the literary life—Answer from Francis Jeffrey.

IN a former chapter a letter has been quoted from Washington Irving to his nephew, warning him off from a literary life. In spite of the unsatisfied tone of that letter, however, Irving has in many places testified to the pleasure and solace which he derived from his pen. "I have never," he told Mr. Theodore Tilton, "found in any thing outside of the four walls of my study, any enjoyment equal to sitting at my writing desk, with a clear page, a new theme, and a mind wide-awake." His Journal is full of similar avowals. At one time he thanks God that his recovery from a fit of illness has placed him in a train to resume the occasional use of his pen. "And when I have that to occupy and solace me I am independent of the world." Again, "my literary occupations have a great effect in rec-

onciling me to a solitary life and even in making it pleasant." The pleasure, however, lay in the writing rather than in seeing himself in print. "Could I afford it, I should like to write and lay my writings aside when finished. There is an independent delight in study and in the creative exercise of the pen; we live in a world of dreams, but publication lets in the noisy rabble and there is an end to our dreaming." Tom Moore used to say that the first conception of a poem was a delicious fool's paradise, though the work of writing it down was tiresome drudgery. "O marvellous power of the imagination!" cries Marmontel. "The pleasure of inventing my story, of arranging its details, the delight with which I watched the dawning of the situations I had in mind,—all this seized upon me and drew me out of myself to such an extent that I could readily have understood the old stories of ecstatic raptures."

Cowper has minutely detailed to us how the task of arresting the fleeting images that fill the mirror of the mind, of holding them fast and forcing them to sit till he has pencilled off a faithful likeness of the forms he views,—and then the disposal of his copies with such art, that each may find its most propitious light, and shine by situation hardly less than by the labor and the skill it cost,

> Are occupations of the poet's mind
> So pleasing, and that steal away the thought

> With such address from themes of sad import
> That, lost in his own musings, happy man!
> He feels the anxieties of life, denied
> Their wonted entertainment, all retire.

Chateaubriand testified that literature was to him more than a consolation; it was a hope and a refuge. Goethe's mother said of her brilliant son that he never had a sorrow without seeking relief by turning it into a poem. Tennyson has a similar thought:

> But for the unquiet heart and brain
> A use in measured language lies,
> The dumb, mechanic exercise
> Like dull narcotics soothing pain.

George Eliot, also, speaks of "that stage of the poet's sufferings, in which he feels the delicious pang of utterance, and makes an image of his sorrows." And Hood testifies to the comfort and blessing that literature can prove in seasons of sickness and sorrow,—"how powerfully intellectual pursuits can help in keeping the head from crazing, and the heart from breaking; nay, not to be too grave, how generous mental food can even atone for a meagre diet; rich fare on the paper for short commons on the cloth." Cicero, retiring from public life in disgust, shut himself up with his books. These, he declared, formerly his diversion, now became the support of his life. When he lost

Tullia, he removed to a friend's house, in whose extensive library he sought a solace for his grief. "My whole conversation is with books," he writes, "yet that is sometimes interrupted by my tears." To the remonstrances of his friends, who sought to draw him out again into active life, he turned a deaf ear. All his solace was in reading and writing, and from the composition of his treatise on "Consolation" he drew the greatest comfort of all. As things grew worse and worse in the commonwealth, books became more and more his one resource; with them conversing he "found himself easy and fancied himself free." And when the time came for him to compose his dissertation on the advantages of old age, he declared the pleasure he had found in writing it to have sufficed, not only to afford him relief in all the complaints of age, but to make age itself even pleasant and cheery to him.

Richard Baxter, thrust into prison in his seventieth year, poor and alone in the world, and in agonies of bodily pain, sought and found comfort in literary labor. "His pen, the faithful companion of his troubles as of his joys, still plied the Herculean tasks which habit had rendered not merely easy but delightful to him." "If I had to choose again my path in life," said Augustin Thierry, who had sacrificed his health and his eyesight to his love of letters, "I would choose that which has led me

where I am." Moore in his Diary declares that the best result of his occasional visits to town and sojournings at Holland House was the real relish with which he returned to his quiet study, "where in the mute society of my own thoughts and books I am never offended or wearied." Hazlitt considers the greatest pleasure in life to be that of reading while we are young; and he claims to have had as much of this pleasure as perhaps any one. But "as I grow older it fades; or else the stronger stimulus of writing takes off the edge of it."

A short time before his death, Buckle said to one of his companions: "I have spent fourteen years of uninterrupted happiness which I imagine few people can boast of; but then it was spent in work such as few men have cared to undergo."

Gail Hamilton asserts that the rewards of a literary life are "of the most delightful kind. What joys it may bring in the higher walks I do not know, but even on the lower levels I should like to live forever—a thousand years to begin with, at any rate. I could speak as enthusiastically as another popular author, 'of all the blessings which my books have brought me—blessings of inward wealth that cannot be so much as named—blessings so rich, so divine, that I sometimes think nothing ever was so beautiful as to have written a book.'" In the preface to the later edition of the "Twice-told Tales," Haw-

thorne is thankful for an opportunity to express how much enjoyment he owed to those volumes, both before and since their publication. "They are the memorials of very tranquil and not unhappy years." They failed, it is true, in winning any extensive popularity, but they brought him in what was far better than fame,—"they opened out to him the way to agreeable associations and to the formation of imperishable friendships, and there are many golden threads, interwoven with his present happiness, which he can follow more or less directly until he finds their commencement here, so that his pleasant pathway among realities seems to proceed from the Dreamland of his youth, and to be bordered with just enough of its shadowy foliage to shelter him from the heat of the day."

In a passage already quoted from the Biographia Literaria, Coleridge instances Southey as the only man he had ever known to be happy and contented as a professional man of letters. Over and over again in his correspondence Southey corroborates Coleridge's statement so far as his own felicity is concerned. A large part of his satisfaction, indeed, arose from his confident anticipation of literary immortality. "One overwhelming propensity," he tells a correspondent, "has formed my destiny, and marred all prospects of rank or wealth, but it has made me happy, and it will make me immortal." In

another letter, after enumerating some of the drawbacks of his position, as that he has to fritter away, in little money-getting employments of silent and obscure exertion, time that might be devoted to the interests of posterity, he adds cheerfully: "Howbeit, I am contented—that is too poor a word—I am pleased and satisfied with my lot. In a profession I might have made a fortune. I shall yet make what will be a fortune to me, and that in a way obedient to the call and impulse of my own nature, and best adapted to develop every moral and intellectual germ implanted in me. How I must by many be regarded as an improvident man, squandering talents that might have made him opulent and raised him to a high rank! Upon their views I confess the charge; but it is a virtue for which I already receive the reward of my own applause, and shall receive the highest rewards as the feelings and truths which I shall enforce produce their effect age after age, so long as our language and our literature endure."

Alas! hardly more than a generation has passed since the good man's death, and a public which still buys Tom Campbell, and Tom Moore, and Mrs. Hemans, and others whom Southey doubtless looked upon as the merest ephemera, has almost forgotten the names of Southey's masterpieces.

Macaulay's devotion to literature, and the pleasure

which that devotion afforded him, were so great that he could not conceive how any one, having the necessary qualifications, would fail to embrace the literary life. He writes as follows to his friend Ellis:

I often wonder what strange infatuation leads men who can do something better to squander their intellect, their health, their energy, on such objects as those which most statesmen are engaged in pursuing. I comprehend perfectly how a man who can debate, but who would make a very indifferent figure as a contributor to an annual or a magazine,—such a man as Stanley, for example,—should take the only line by which he can attain distinction. But that a man before whom the two paths of literature and politics lie open, and who might hope for eminence in either, should choose politics and quit literature, seems to me madness. On the one side are health, leisure, peace of mind, the search after truth, and all the enjoyments of friendship and conversation; on the other side are almost certain ruin to the constitution, constant labor, constant anxiety. Every friendship which a man may have becomes precarious as soon as he engages in politics. As to abuse, men soon become callous to it; but the discipline which makes them callous is very severe. And for what is it that a man who might, if he chose, rise and lie down at his own hour, engage in any study, enjoy any amusement, and visit any place, consents to make himself as much a prisoner as if he were within the rules of the Fleet; to be tethered during

eleven months of the year within the circle of half a mile round Charing Cross; to sit or stand night after night, for ten or eleven hours, inhaling a noisome atmosphere, and listening to harangues of which nine-tenths are far below the level of a leading article in a newspaper? For what is it that he submits, day after day, to see the morning break over the Thames, and then totters home, with bursting temples, to his bed? Is it for fame? Who would compare the fame of Charles Townsend to that of Hume, that of Lord North to that of Gibbon, that of Lord Chatham to that of Johnson? Who can look back on the life of Burke and not regret that the years which he passed in ruining his health and temper by political exertions were not passed in the composition of some great and durable work? Who can read the letters to Atticus and not feel that Cicero would have been an infinitely happier and better man, and not a less celebrated man, if he had left us fewer speeches and more Academic Questions and Tusculan Disputations? if he had passed the time which he spent in brawling with Vatinius and Clodius in producing a history of Rome superior to that even of Livy? But these are meditations in a quiet garden, situated far beyond the contagious influence of English faction. What I might feel if I again saw Downing Street and Palace Yard is another question. I tell you sincerely my present feelings.

The passage is manly and honest. But it evidences that inability to appreciate any but the more

obvious motives to action, that indifference to the finer instincts, which gives color, at least, to the charge of Philistinism that it is the modern fashion to bring against Macaulay. For surely there are higher aspirations than the desire of fame. I like to think, what I trust no one doubts, that it is something nobler than the attainment of any mere selfish end which moved Carlyle or Ruskin or Newman to write, or which sent John Stuart Mill into Parliament. The love of fame is at the best a purely selfish passion—selfish, that is, in the sense that all its aims are personal, and at the worst it may lead a small mind into rancorous envies and jealousies meaner even than the meannesses which attend the inordinate lust of money. Kept within due bounds no doubt it may reach noble results, and no passion with such results can be essentially ignoble. But so may the love of money in a healthy mind be conducive to the welfare and prosperity of the race, and surely these are noble results. And yet the love of money has never been classed among the higher impulses.

The letter of Macaulay's was shown to Francis Jeffrey, who thus alludes to it and combats some of its propositions in his correspondence with Ellis, the mutual friend.

It is a very striking and interesting letter; and certainly puts the *pros* and *cons* as to public life in a pow-

erful way for the latter. But, after all, will either human motives or human duties ever bear such a dissection? and should we not all become Houynhnhnms or Quakers, and selfish cowardly fellows, if we were to act on views so systematic? Who the devil would ever have any thing to do with love or war, nay, who would venture himself on the sea, or on a galloping horse, if he were to calculate in this way the chances of shortening life or forfeiting comfort by such venturesome doings? And is there not a vocation in the gifts which fit us for particular stations to which it is a duty to listen? Addison and Gibbon did well to write, because they *could* not speak in public. But is that any rule for M.? And then as to the tranquillity of an author's life, I confess I have no sort of faith in it, and am sure that as eloquent a picture might be drawn of its cares and fears and mortifications, its feverish anxieties, humiliating rivalries and jealousies, and heart-sinking exhaustion, as he has set before us of a statesman. And as to fame, if an author's is now and then more lasting, it is generally longer withheld, and, except in a few rare cases, is of a less pervading or elevating description. A great poet, or great *original* writer, is above all other glory. But who would give much for such a glory as Gibbon's? Besides, I believe it is in the inward glow and pride of consciously influencing the great destinies of mankind, much more than in the sense of personal reputation, that the delight of either poet or statesman chiefly consists. Shakespeare plainly cared nothing about his glory, and Milton referred it to other ages. And, after all, why not be *both* statesmen and authors, like Burke and Clarendon?

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